

Harper's Anthology

Poetry

Colleges . . . have their indispensable office—to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires set the hearts of their youth on flame.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

HARPER'S ANTHOLOGY

For College Courses in
Composition and Literature

Poetry

Edited by

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HARPER'S ANTHOLOGY: *Poetry*

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PREFACE

HARPER'S ANTHOLOGY is a series of three volumes: *Prose*, *Poetry*, and an accompanying *Manual of Instruction*. The last-named volume contains a brief statement of general ideas which underlie the collection as an educational instrument, together with some suggestions for its use in relation to composition.

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In the notes of this volume, "*Prose*" is used as an abbreviation for "*Harper's Anthology: Prose.*"

For explanatory matter in italics preceding an item, or connecting its parts, the present editors—unless otherwise noted—are responsible.

I

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

*Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his de-
mesne;*

*Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and
bold:*

*Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.*

—JOHN KEATS

I INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

YOU know we French stormed Ratisbon:
 A mile or so away,
 On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow,
 Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused, "My plans
 That soar, to earth may fall,
 Let once my army-leader Lannes
 Waver at yonder wall,"—
 Out 'twixt the battery smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
 Full galloping; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse's mane, a boy;
 You hardly could suspect—
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came through),
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
 We've got you Ratisbon!
 The marshal's in the market-place,
 And you'll be there anon

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes:
"You're wounded!" "Nay," his soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, sire!" And, his chief beside,
Smiling, the boy fell dead.

Robert Browning

2

HERVÉ RIEL¹

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Dam-
freville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signaled to the place:
"Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick—or, quicker
still,
Here's the English can and will!"

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NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;

“Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?”

laughed they:

“Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and
scored,

Shall the *Formidable* here with her twelve and eighty guns

Think to make the river mouth by the single narrow way,

Trust to enter where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,

And with flow at full beside?

Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring? Rather say,

While rock stands or water runs,

Not a ship will leave the bay!”

Then was called a council straight.

Brief and bitter the debate:

“Here's the English at our heels, would you have them take
in tow

All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,

For a prize to Plymouth Sound?

Better run the ships aground!”

(Ended Damfreville his speech).

“Not a minute more to wait!

Let the captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!

France must undergo her fate.

“Give the word!” But no such word

Was ever spoke or heard:

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these

—A captain? A lieutenant? A mate—first, second, third?

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

And “What mockery or malice have we here?” cries Hervé
Riel:

“Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or
rogues?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell,

’Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disem-
bogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying’s for
Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than
fifty Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there’s
a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this *Formidable* clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound:

And if one ship misbehave,

—Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why I’ve nothing but my life,—here’s my head!” cries
Hervé Riel.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Not a minute more to wait.

“Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!” cried
its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God’s grace!

See the noble fellow’s face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea’s
profound!

See, safe through shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock,

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past,

All are harbored to the last,

And just as Hervé Riel hollas “Anchor!”—sure as fate,

Up the English come—too late!

So, the storm subsides to calm:

They see the green trees wave

On the heights o’erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch’d with balm.

“Just our rapture to enhance,

Let the English rake the bay,

Gnash their teeth and glare askance

As they cannonade away!

’Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!”

How hope succeeds despair on each captain’s countenance!

Out burst all with one accord,

“This is Paradise for Hell!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
 "Hervé Riel!"

As he stepped in front once more,
 Not a symptom of surprise
 In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
I must speak out at the end,

 Though I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
 You must name your own reward.

'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Dam-
freville."

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:

"Since I needs must say my say,
 Since on board the duty's done,
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a
 run?—

Since 'tis ask and have, I may—

 Since the others go ashore—
Come! A good whole holiday!

 Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"
 That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Name and deed alike are lost:

Not a pillar nor a post

In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;

Not a head in white and black

On a single fishing-smack,

In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack

All that France saved from the fight whence England bore
the bell.

Go to Paris: rank on rank

Search the heroes flung pell-mell

On the Louvre, face and flank!

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.

So, for better and for worse,

Hervé Riel, accept my verse,

In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more

Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife, the Belle
Aurore!

Robert Browning

3

BATTLE OF THE BALTIC

OF Nelson and the North
Sing the glorious day's renown,
When to battle fierce came forth
All the might of Denmark's crown,
And her arms along the deep proudly shone;
By each gun the lighted brand
In a bold, determined hand,
And the Prince of all the land
Led them on.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Like leviathans afloat
Lay their bulwarks on the brine;
While the sign of battle flew
On the lofty British line:
It was ten of April morn by the chime:
As they drifted on their path
There was silence deep as death;
And the boldest held his breath
For a time.

But the might of England flushed
To anticipate the scene;
And her van the fleeter rushed
O'er the deadly space between.
“Hearts of oak!” our captains cried, when each gun
From its adamant lips
Spread a death-shade round the ships,
Like the hurricane eclipse
Of the sun.

Again! again! again!
And the havoc did not slack,
Till a feeble cheer the Dane
To our cheering sent us back;
Their shots along the deep slowly boom:
Then ceased—and all is wail,
As they strike the shattered sail;
Or in conflagration pale
Light the gloom.

Out spoke the victor then
As he hailed them o'er the wave,
“Ye are brothers! ye are men!
And we conquer but to save:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

So peace instead of death let us bring:
But yield, proud foe, thy fleet
With the crews, at England's feet,
And make submission meet
To our King."

Then Denmark blest our chief
That he gave her wounds repose;
And the sounds of joy and grief
From her people wildly rose,
As death withdrew his shades from the day:
While the sun looked smiling bright
O'er a wide and woeful sight,
Where the fires of funeral light
Died away.

Now joy, old England, raise
For the tidings of thy might,
By the festal cities' blaze,
Whilst the wine cup shines in light;
And yet amidst that joy and uproar,
Let us think of them that sleep
Full many a fathom deep
By thy wild and stormy steep,
Elsinore!

Brave hearts! to Britain's pride
Once so faithful and so true,
On the deck of fame that died
With the gallant good Riou:
Soft sigh the winds of heaven o'er their grave!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

While the billow mournful rolls
And the mermaid's song condoles,
Singing glory to the souls
Of the brave!

Thomas Campbell

4 ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE

TOLL for the brave—
The brave! that are no more:
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore.
Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel
And laid her on her side;
A land breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave—
Brave Kempenfelt is gone,
His last sea fight is fought,
His work of glory done.
It was not in the battle,
No tempest gave the shock,
She sprang no fatal leak,
She ran upon no rock;
His sword was in the sheath,
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes,
And mingle with your cup
The tears that England owes;
Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again,
Full charged with England's thunder,
And plow the distant main;
But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
Must plow the wave no more.

William Cowper

5

WITH WALKER IN NICARAGUA¹

*Come to my sunland! Come with me
To the land I love; where the sun and sea
Are wed forever: where palm and pine
Are filled with singers; where tree and vine
Are voiced with prophets! O come, and you
Shall sing a song with the seas that swirl
And kiss their hands to the cold white girl,
To the maiden moon in her mantle of blue.*

I

HE was all man: let this be said
Above my brave dishonored dead.
I ask no more, this is not much,
Yet I disdain a colder touch
To memory as dear as his;
For he was true as any star,
And brave as Yuba's grizzlies are,

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NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Yet gentle as the panther is
Mouthing her young in her first fierce kiss;
Tall, courtly, grand as any king,
Yet simple as a child at play,
In camp and court the same alway,
And never moved at anything;
A dash of sadness in his air,
Born, may be, of his over care,
And, may be, born of a despair
In early love—I never knew;
I questioned not, as many do,
Of things as sacred as this is;
I only knew that he to me
Was all a father, friend, could be;
I sought to know no more than this
Of history of him or his.

A piercing eye, a princely air,
A presence like a chevalier,
Half angel and half Lucifer;
Fair fingers, jeweled manifold
With great gems set in hoops of gold;
Sombrero black, with plume of snow
That swept his long silk locks below;
A red serape with bars of gold,
Heedless falling, fold on fold;
A sash of silk, where flashing swung
A sword as swift as serpent's tongue,
In sheath of silver chased in gold;
A face of blended pride and pain,
Of mingled pleading and disdain,
With shades of glory and of grief;
And Spanish spurs with bells of steel
That dashed and dangled at the heel—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The famous filibuster chief
Stood by his tent 'mid tall brown trees -
That top the fierce Cordilleras,
With bent arm arched above his brow;—
Stood still—he stands, a picture, now—
Long gazing down the sunset seas.

II

What strange strong bearded men were these
He led toward the tropic seas!
Men sometime of uncommon birth,
Men rich in histories untold,
Who boasted not, though more than bold,
Blown from the four parts of the earth,
Men mighty-thewed as Samson was,
That had been kings in any cause,
A remnant of the races past;
Dark-browed as if in iron cast,
Broad-breasted as twin gates of brass,—
Men strangely brave and fiercely true,
Who dared the West when giants were,
Who erred, yet bravely dared to err;
A remnant of that early few
Who held no crime or curse or vice
As dark as that of cowardice;
With blendings of the worst and best
Of faults and virtues that have blest
Or cursed or thrilled the human breast.

They rode, a troop of bearded men,
Rode two and two out from the town,
And some were blond and some were brown
And all as brave as Sioux; but when
From San Bennetto south the line

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

That bound them in the laws of men
Was passed, and peace stood mute behind
And streamed a banner to the wind
The world knew not, there was a sign
Of awe, of silence, rear and van.
Men thought who never thought before;
I heard the clang and clash of steel
From sword at hand or spur at heel
And iron feet, but nothing more.
Some thought of Texas, some of Maine,
But more of rugged Tennessee,—
Of scenes in Southern vales of wine,
And scenes in Northern hills of pine
As scenes they might not meet again;
And one of Avon thought, and one
Thought of an isle beneath the sun,
And one of Rowley, one the Rhine,
And one turned sadly to the Spree.

Defeat meant something more than death:
The world was ready, keen to smite,
As stern and still beneath its ban
With iron will and bated breath,
Their hands against their fellow-man,
They rode—each man an Ishmaelite.
But when we struck the hills of pine,
These men dismounted, doffed their cares,
Talked loud and laughed old love affairs,
And on the grass took meat and wine,
And never gave a thought again
To land or life that lay behind,
Or love, or care of any kind
Beyond the present cross or pain.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And I, a waif of stormy seas,
A child among such men as these,
Was blown along this savage surf
And rested with them on the turf,
And took delight below the trees.
I did not question, did not care
To know the right or wrong. I saw
That savage freedom had a spell,
And loved it more than I can tell,
And snapped my fingers at the law.
I bear my burden of the shame,—
I shun it not, and naught forget,
However much I may regret:
I claim some candor to my name,
And courage cannot change or die.—
Did they deserve to die? they died.
Let justice then be satisfied,
And as for me, why what am I?

The standing side by side till death,
The dying for some wounded friend,
The faith that failed not to the end,
The strong endurance till the breath
And body took their ways apart,
I only know, I keep my trust.
Their vices! earth has them by heart.
Their virtues! they are with their dust.

How wound we through the solid wood,
With all its broad boughs hung in green,
With lichen-mosses trailed between!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

How waked the spotted beasts of prey,
Deep sleeping from the face of day,
And dashed them like a troubled flood
Down some defile and denser wood!

And snakes, long, lithe and beautiful
As green and graceful-boughed bamboo,
Did twist and twine them through and through
The boughs that hung red-fruited full.
One, monster-sized, above me hung,
Close eyed me with his bright pink eyes,
Then raised his folds, and swayed and swung,
And licked like lightning his red tongue,
Then oped his wide mouth with surprise;
He writhed and curved, and raised and lowered
His folds like liftings of the tide,
And sank so low I touched his side,
As I rode by, with my broad sword.

The trees shook hands high overhead,
And bowed and intertwined across
The narrow way, while leaves and moss
And luscious fruit, gold-hued and red,
Through all the canopy of green,
Let not one sunshaft shoot between.

Birds hung and swung, green-robed and red,
Or drooped in curved lines dreamily,
Rainbows reversed, from tree to tree,
Or sang low-hanging overhead—
Sang low, as if they sang and slept,
Sang faint, like some far waterfall,
And took no note of us at all,
Though nuts that in the way were spread
Did crush and crackle as we stept.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Wild lilies, tall as maidens are,
As sweet of breath, as pearly fair,
As fair as faith, as pure as truth,
Fell thick before our every tread,
As in a sacrifice to ruth,
And all the air with perfume filled
More sweet than ever man distilled.
The ripened fruit a fragrance shed
And hung in hand-reach overhead,
In nest of blossoms on the shoot,
The bending shoot that bore the fruit.

How ran the monkeys through the leaves!
How rushed they through, brown clad and blue,
Like shuttles hurried through and through
The threads a hasty weaver weaves!

How quick they cast us fruits of gold,
Then loosened hand and all foothold,
And hung limp, limber, as if dead,
Hung low and listless overhead;
And all the time, with half-oped eyes
Bent full on us in mute surprise—
Looked wisely too, as wise hens do
That watch you with the head askew.

The long days through from blossomed trees
There came the sweet song of sweet bees,
With chorus-tones of cockatoo
That slid his beak along the bough,
And walked and talked and hung and swung,
In crown of gold and coat of blue,
The wisest fool that ever sung,
Or had a crown, or held a tongue.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Oh, when we broke the somber wood
And pierced at last the sunny plain,
How wild and still with wonder stood
The proud mustangs with bannered mane,
And necks that never knew a rein,
And nostrils lifted high, and blown,
Fierce breathing as a hurricane:
Yet by their leader held the while
In solid column, square, and file,
And ranks more martial than our own!

Some one above the common kind,
Some one to look to, lean upon,
I think is much a woman's mind;
But it was mine, and I had drawn
A rein beside the chief while we
Rode through the forest leisurely;
When he grew kind and questioned me
Of kindred, home, and home affair,
Of how I came to wander there,
And had my father herds and land,
And men in hundreds at command?
At which I silent shook my head,
Then, timid, met his eyes and said,
"Not so. Where sunny foothills run
Down to the North Pacific sea,
And Willamette meets the sun
In many angles, patiently
My father tends his flocks of snow,
And turns alone the mellow sod
And sows some fields not overbroad,
And mourns my long delay in vain,
Nor bids one serve-man come or go;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

While mother from her wheel or churn,
And may be from the milking shed,
There lifts an humble weary head
To watch and wish for my return
Across the camas' blossomed plain."

He held his bent head very low,
A sudden sadness in his air;
Then turned and touched my yellow hair
And took the long locks in his hand,
Toyed with them, smiled, and let them go,
Then thrummed about his saddle bow
As thought ran swift across his face;
Then turning sudden from his place,
He gave some short and quick command.
They brought the best steed of the band,
They swung a bright sword at my side,
He bade me mount and by him ride,
And from that hour to the end
I never felt the need of friend.

Far in the wildest quinine wood
We found a city old—so old,
Its very walls were turned to mould,
And stately trees upon them stood.
No history has mentioned it,
No map has given it a place;
The last dim trace of tribe and race—
The world's forgetfulness is fit.

It held one structure grand and mossed,
Mighty as any castle sung,
And old when oldest Ind was young,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With threshold Christian never crossed;
A temple builded to the sun,
Along whose somber altar-stone
Brown bleeding virgins had been strown
Like leaves, when leaves are crisp and dun,
In ages ere the Sphinx was born,
Or Babylon had birth or morn.

My chief led up the marble step—
He ever led, broad blade in hand—
When down the stones, with double hand
Clutched to his blade, a savage leapt,
Hot bent to barter life for life.
The chieftain drove his bowie knife
Full through his thick and broad breast-bone,
And broke the point against the stone,
The dark stone of the temple wall.
I saw him loose his hold and fall
Full length with head hung down the step;
I saw run down a ruddy flood
Of rushing pulsing human blood.
Then from the crowd a woman crept
And kissed the gory hands and face,
And smote herself. Then one by one
The dark crowd crept and did the same,
Then bore the dead man from the place.
Down darkened aisles the brown priests came,
So picture-like, with sandaled feet
And long gray dismal grass-wove gowns,
So like the pictures of old time,
And stood all still and dark of frowns,
At blood upon the stone and street.
So we laid ready hand to sword
And boldly spoke some bitter word;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But they were stubborn still, and stood
Dark frowning as a winter wood,
And muttering something of the crime
Of blood upon the temple stone,
As if the first that it had known.

We turned toward the massive door
With clash of steel at heel, and with
Some swords all red and ready drawn.
I traced the sharp edge of my sword
Along the marble wall and floor
For crack or crevice; there was none.
From one vast mount of marble stone
The mighty temple had been cored
By nut-brown children of the sun,
When stars were newly bright and blithe
Of song along the rim of dawn,
A mighty marble monolith!

III

Through marches through the mazy wood,
And may be through too much of blood,
At last we came down to the seas.
A city stood, white-walled and brown
With age, in nest of orange trees;
And this we won, and many a town
And rancho reaching up and down,
Then rested in the red-hot days
Beneath the blossomed orange trees,
Made drowsy with the drum of bees,
And drank in peace the south-sea breeze,
Made sweet with sweeping boughs of bays.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Well! there were maidens, shy at first,
And then, erelong, not over-shy.
Yet pure of soul and proudly chare.
No love on earth has such an eye!
No land there is is blessed or cursed
With such a limb or grace of face,
Or gracious form, or genial air!
In all the bleak Northland not one
Hath been so warm of soul to me
As coldest soul by that warm sea,
Beneath the bright hot centered sun.

No lands where any ices are
Approach, or ever dare compare
With warm loves born beneath the sun.
The one the cold white steady star,
The lifted shifting sun the one.
I grant you fond, I grant you fair,
I grant you honor, trust and truth,
And years as beautiful as youth,
And many years beyond the sun,
And faith as fixed as any star;
But all the Northland hath not one
So warm of soul as sun-maids are.

I was but in my boyhood then,
I count my fingers over, so,
And find it years and years ago,
And I am scarcely yet of men.
But I was tall and lithe and fair,
With rippled tide of yellow hair,
And prone to mellowness of heart;
While she was tawny-red like wine,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With black hair boundless as the night,
As for the rest I knew my part,
At least was apt, and willing quite
To learn, to listen, and incline
To teacher warm and wise as mine.

O bright, bronzed maidens of the sun!
So fairer far to look upon
Than curtains of the Solomon,
Or Kedar's tents, or anyone,
Or anything beneath the sun!
What followed then? What has been done,
And said, and writ, and read, and sung?
What will be writ and read again,
While love is life, and life remain?—
While maids will heed, and men have tongue?

What followed then? But let that pass.
I hold one picture in my heart,
Hung curtained, and not any part
Of all its dark tint ever has
Been looked upon by anyone.
But if, may be, one brave and strong
As liftings of the bristled sea
Steps forth from out the days to be
And knocks heart-wise, and enters bold
A rugged heart inured to wrong—
As one would storm a strong stronghold—
Strong-footed, and most passing fair
Of truth, and thought beyond her years,
We two will lift the crape in tears,
Will turn the canvas to the sun,
Will trace the features one by one
Of my dear dead, in still despair.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Love well who will, love wise who can,
But love, be loved, for God is love;
Love pure, like cherubim above;
Love maids, and hate not any man.
Sit as sat we by orange tree,
Beneath the broad bough and grape-vine
Top-tangled in the tropic shine,
Close face to face, close to the sea,
And full of the red-centered sun,
With grand sea-songs upon the soul,
Rolled melody on melody,
Like echoes of deep organ's roll,
And love, nor question anyone.

If God is love, is love not God?
As high priests say, let prophets sing,
Without reproach or reckoning;
This much I say, knees knit to sod,
And low voice lifted, questioning.

Let eyes be not dark eyes, but dreams,
Or drifting clouds with flashing fires,
Or far delights, or fierce desires,
Yet not be more than well beseems;
Let hearts be pure and strong and true,
Let lips be luscious and blood-red,
Let earth in gold be garmented
And tented in her tent of blue,
Let goodly rivers glide between
Their leaning willow walls of green,
Let all things be filled of the sun,
And full of warm winds of the sea,
And I beneath my vine and tree

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Take rest, nor war with anyone;
Then I will thank God with full cause,
Say this is well, is as it was.

Let lips be red, for God has said
Love is like one gold-garmented,
And made them so for such a time.
Therefore let lips be red, therefore
Let love be ripe in ruddy prime,
Let hope beat high, let hearts be true,
And you be wise thereat, and you
Drink deep, and ask not any more.

Let red lips lift, proud curled, to kiss,
And round limbs lean and raise and reach
In love too passionate for speech,
Too full of blessedness and bliss
For anything but this and this;
Let luscious lips lean hot to kiss
And swoon in love, while all the air
Is redolent with balm of trees,
And mellow with the song of bees,
While birds sit singing everywhere—
And you will have not any more
Than I in boyhood, by that shore
Of olives, had in years of yore.

Let the unclean think things unclean;
I swear tip-toed, with lifted hands,
That we were pure as sea-washed sands,
That not one coarse thought came between;
Believe or disbelieve who will,
Unto the pure all things are pure;
As for the rest, I can endure
Alike their good will or their ill.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

She boasted Montezuma's blood,
Was pure of soul as Tahoe's flood,
And strangely fair and princely souled,
And she was rich in blood and gold—
More rich in love grown over-bold
From its own consciousness of strength.
How warm! Oh, not for any cause
Could I declare how warm she was,
In her brown beauty and hair's length.
We loved in the sufficient sun,
We lived in elements of fire,
For love is fire and fierce desire;
Yet lived as pure as priest and nun.

We lay slow rocking in the bay
In birch canoe beneath the crags
Thick, topped with palm, like sweeping flags
Between us and the burning day.
The red-eyed crocodile lay low
Or lifted from his rich rank fern,
And watched us and the tide by turn,
And we slow cradled to and fro.

And slow we cradled on till night,
And told the old tale, overtold,
As misers in recounting gold
Each time do take a new delight.
With her pure passion-given grace
She drew her warm self close to me;
And, her two brown hands on my knee,
And her two black eyes in my face,
She then grew sad and guessed at ill,
And in the future seemed to see
With woman's ken of prophecy;
Yet proffered her devotion still.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And plaintive so, she gave a sign,
A token cut of virgin gold,
That all her tribe should ever hold
Its wearer as some one divine,
Nor touch him with a hostile hand.
And I in turn gave her a blade,
A dagger, worn as well by maid
As man, in that half-lawless land;
It had a massive silver hilt,
Had a most keen and cunning blade,
A gift by chief and comrades made
For reckless blood at Rivas spilt.
"Show this," said I, "too well 'tis known,
And worth an hundred lifted spears,
Should ill beset your sunny years;
There is not one in Walker's band,
But at the sight of this alone,
Will reach a brave and ready hand,
And make your right or wrong his own."

IV

Love while 'tis day; night cometh soon,
Wherein no man or maiden may;
Love in the strong young prime of day;
Drink drunk with love in ripe red noon,
Red noon of love and life and sun;
Walk in love's light as in sunshine,
Drink in that sun as drinking wine,
Drink swift, nor question anyone;
For loves change sure as man or moon,
And wane like warm full days of June.

O Love, so fair of promises,
Bend here thy brow, blow here thy kiss,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Bend here thy bow above the storm
But once, if only this once more.
Comes there no patient Christ to save,
Touch and reanimate thy form
Long three days dead and in the grave?
Spread here thy silken net of jet;
Since man is false, since maids forget,
Since man must fall for his sharp sin.
Be thou the pit that I fall in;
I seek no safer fall than this.
Since man must die for some dark sin,
Blind leading blind, let come to this,
And my death-crime be one deep kiss.
Lo! I have found another land,
May I not find another love,
True, trusting as a bosomed dove,
To lay its whole heart in my hand? ¹

* * * *

Ill comes disguised in many forms:
Fair winds are but a prophecy
Of foulest winds full soon to be—
The brighter these, the blacker they;
The clearest night has darkest day,
And brightest days bring blackest storms.
There came reverses to our arms;
I saw the signal-light's alarms
At night red-crescenting the bay.
The foe poured down a flood next day
As strong as tides when tides are high,
And drove us bleeding in the sea,
In such wild haste of flight that we
Had hardly time to arm and fly.

¹ The seven following lines are omitted.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Blown from the shore, borne far a-sea,
I lifted my two hands on high
With wild soul plashing to the sky,
And cried, "O more than crowns to me,
Farewell at last to love and thee!"
I walked the deck, I kissed my hand
Back to the far and fading shore,
And bent a knee as to implore,
Until the last dark head of land
Slid down behind the dimpled sea.
At last I sank in troubled sleep,
A very child, rocked by the deep,
Sad questioning the fate of her
Before the savage conqueror.

The loss of comrades, power, place,
A city walled, cool shaded ways,
Cost me no care at all; somehow
I only saw her sad brown face,
And—I was younger then than now.

Red flashed the sun across the deck,
Slow flapped the idle sails, and slow
The black ship cradled to and fro.
Afar my city lay, a speck
Of white against a line of blue;
Around, half lounging on the deck,
Some comrades chatted two by two.
I held a new-filled glass of wine,
And with the mate talked as in play
Of fierce events of yesterday,
To coax his light life into mine.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He jerked the wheel, as slow he said,
Low laughing with averted head,
And so, half sad: "You bet they'll fight;
They followed in canim, canoe,
A perfect fleet, that on the blue
Lay dancing till the mid of night.
Would you believe! one little cuss—
(He turned his stout head slow sidewise,
And 'neath his hat-rim took the skies)—
In petticoats did follow us
The livelong night, and at the dawn
Her boat lay rocking in the lee,
Scarce one short pistol-shot from me."
This said the mate, half mournfully,
Then pecked at us; for he had drawn,
By bright light heart and homely wit,
A knot of us around the wheel,
Which he stood whirling like a reel,
For the still ship recked not of it.

"And where's she now?" one careless said,
With eyes slow lifting to the brine,
Swift swept the instant far by mine;
The bronzed mate listed, shook his head,
Spirted a stream of amber wide
Across and over the ship side,
Jerked at the wheel and slow replied:

"She had a dagger in her hand,
She rose, she raised it, tried to stand,
But fell, and so upset herself:
Yet still the poor brown savage elf,
Each time the long light wave would toss
And lift her form from out the sea,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Would shake a strange bright blade at me,
With rich hilt chased a cunning cross.
At last she sank, but still the same
She shook the dagger in the air,
As if to still defy and dare,
And sinking seemed to call your name."

I dashed my wine against the wall,
I rushed across the deck, and all
The sea I swept and swept again,
With lifted hand, with eye and glass,
But all was idle and in vain.
I saw a red-billed sea-gull pass,
A petrel sweeping round and round,
I heard the far white sea-surf sound,
But no sign could I hear or see
Of one so more than seas to me.

I cursed the ship, the shore, the sea,
The brave brown mate, the bearded men;
I had a fever then, and then
Ship, shore, and sea were one to me;
And weeks we on the dead waves lay,
And I more truly dead than they.
At last some rested on an isle;
The few strong-breasted with a smile
Returning to the sunny shore,
Scarce counting of the pain or cost,
Scarce recking if they won or lost;
They sought but action, asked no more;
They counted life but as a game,
With full per cent against them, and
Staked all upon a single hand,
And lost or won, content the same.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I never saw my chief again,
I never sought again the shore,
Or saw my white-walled city more.
I could not bear the more than pain
At sight of blossomed orange trees
Or blended song of birds and bees,
The sweeping shadows of the palm
Or spicy breath of bay and balm.
And striving to forget the while,
I wandered through the dreary isle.
Here black with juniper, and there
Made white with goats in summer coats,
The only things that anywhere
We found with life in all the land,
Save birds that ran long-billed and brown,
Long-legged and still as shadows are,
Like dancing shadows, up and down
The sea-rim on the swelt'ring sand.

The warm sea laid his dimpled face,
With every white hair smoothed in place,
As if asleep against the land;
Great turtles slept upon his breast,
As thick as eggs in any nest;
I could have touched them with my hand.

* * * *

I would some things were dead and hid,
Well dead and buried deep as hell,
With recollection dead as well,
And resurrection God-forbid.
They irk me with their weary spell
Of fascination, eye to eye,
And hot mesmeric serpent hiss,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Through all the dull eternal days.
Let them turn by, go on their ways,
Let them depart or let me die;
For life is but a beggar's lie,
And as for death, I grin at it;
I do not care one whiff or whit
Whether it be or that or this.

I give my hand; the world is wide;
Then farewell memories of yore,
Between us let strife be no more;
Turn as you choose to either side;
Say, Fare-you-well, shake hands and say—
Speak loud, and say with stately grace,
Hand clutching hand, face bent to face—
Farewell for ever and a day.

O passion-tossed and bleeding past,
Part now, part well, part wide apart,
As ever ships on ocean slid
Down, down the sea, hull, sail, and mast;
And in the album of my heart
Let hide the pictures of your face,
With other pictures in their place,
Slid over like a coffin's lid.

* * * *

The days and grass grow long together;
They now fell short and crisp again,
And all the fair face of the main
Grew dark and wrinkled at the weather.
Through all the summer sun's decline
Fell news of triumphs and defeats,
Of hard advances, hot retreats—
Then days and days and not a line.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

At last one night they came. I knew
Ere yet the boat had touched the land
That all was lost: they were so few
I near could count them on one hand;
But he, the leader, led no more.
The proud chief still disdained to fly,
But, like one wrecked, clung to the shore,
And struggled on, and struggling fell
From power to a prison cell,
And only left that cell to die.

* * * *

My recollection, like a ghost,
Goes from this sea to that seaside,
Goes and returns as turns the tide,
Then turns again unto the coast.
I know not which I mourn the most,
My brother or my virgin bride,
My chief or my unwedded wife.
The one was as the lordly sun,
To joy in, bask in, and admire;
The peaceful moon was as the one,
To love, to look to, and desire;
And both a part of my young life.

* * * *

Years after, sheltered from the sun
Beneath a Sacramento bay,
A black Muchacho¹ by me lay
Along the long grass crisp and dun,
His brown mule browsing by his side,
And told with all a peon's pride
How he once fought, how long and well,

¹ Youth (Spanish).

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Broad breast to breast, red hand to hand,
Against a foe for his fair land,
And how the fierce invader fell;
And artless told me how he died.

To die with hand and brow unbound
He gave his gems and jeweled sword;
Thus at the last the warrior found
Some freedom for his steel's reward.
He walked out from the prison wall
Dressed like a prince for a parade,
And made no note of man or maid,
But gazed out calmly over all;
Then looked afar, half paused, and then
Above the mottled sea of men
He kissed his thin hand to the sun;
Then smiled so proudly none had known
But he was stepping to a throne,
Yet took no note of anyone.
A nude brown beggar peon child,
Encouraged as the captive smiled,
Looked up, half scared, half pitying;
He stooped, he caught it from the sands,
Put bright coins in its two brown hands,
Then strode on like another king.

Two deep, a musket's length, they stood,
Afront, in sandals, nude, and dun
As death and darkness wove in one,
Their thick lips thirsting for his blood.
He took their black hands one by one,
And, smiling with a patient grace,
Forgave them all and took his place.
He bared his broad brow to the sun,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Gave one long last look to the sky,
The white-winged clouds that hurried by,
The olive hills in orange hue;
A last list to the cockatoo
That hung by beak from cocoa-bough
Hard by, and hung and sung as though
He never was to sing again,
Hung all red-crowned and robed in green,
With belts of gold and blue between.—

A bow, a touch of heart, a pall
Of purple smoke, a crash, a thud,
A warrior's raiment rent, and blood,
A face in dust and—that was all.

Success had made him more than king;
Defeat made him the vilest thing
In name, contempt or hate can bring:
So much the leaded dice of war
Do make or mar of character.

Speak ill who will of him, he died
In all disgrace; say of the dead
His heart was black, his hands were red—
Say this much, and be satisfied;
Gloat over it all undenied.
I only say that he to me,
Whatever he to others was,
Was truer far than anyone
That I have known beneath the sun,
Sinner, saint, or Pharisee,
As boy or man, for any cause;
I simply say he was my friend
When strong of hand and fair of fame:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Dead and disgraced, I stand the same
To him, and so shall to the end.

I lay this crude wreath on his dust,
Inwove with sad, sweet memories
Recalled here by these colder seas.
I leave the wild bird with his trust,
To sing and say him nothing wrong;
I wake no rivalry of song.

He lies low in the leveled sand,
Unsheltered from the tropic sun,
And now of all he knew not one
Will speak him fair in that far land.
Perhaps 'twas this that made me seek,
Disguised, his grave one winter-tide;
A weakness for the weaker side,
A siding with the helpless weak.

A palm not far held out a hand,
Hard by a long green bamboo swung
And bent like some great bow unstrung,
And quivered like a willow wand;
Beneath a broad banana's leaf,
Perched on its fruits that crooked hang,
A bird in rainbow splendor sang
A low sad song of tempered grief.

No sod, no sign, no cross nor stone,
But at his side a cactus green
Upheld its lances long and keen;
It stood in hot red sands alone,
Flat-palmed and fierce with lifted spears;
One bloom of crimson crowned its head,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

A drop of blood, so bright, so red,
Yet redolent as roses' tears.
In my left hand I held a shell,
All rosy lipped and pearly red;
I laid it by his lowly bed,
For he did love so passing well
The grand songs of the solemn sea.
O shell! sing well, wild, with a will,
When storms blow loud and birds be still,
The wildest sea-song known to thee!

I said some things, with folded hands,
Soft whispered in the dim sea-sound,
And eyes held humbly to the ground,
And frail knees sunken in the sands.
He had done more than this for me,
And yet I could not well do more:
I turned me down the olive shore,
And set a sad face to the sea.

Joaquin Miller

6

SIR PATRICK SPENCE

THE king sits in Dumferling toun,
Drinking the blude-reid wine:
“O whar will I get guid sailor,
To sail this schip of mine?”

Up and spak an eldern knicht,
Sat at the kings richt kne:
“Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor
That sails upon the se.”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The king has written a braid letter,
And sign'd it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch lauched he;
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.

"O wha is this has don this deid,
This ill deid don to me,
To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se!

"Mak hast, mak hast, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne:"

"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.

"Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone;
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone,

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair.

Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

Old Ballad

7

“WILLY’S rare, and Willy’s fair,
And Willy’s wondrous bony,
And Willy heght to marry me,
Gin eer he marryd ony.

“Yestreen I made my bed fu brade,
The night I’ll make it narrow,
For a’ the live-long winter’s night
I lie twin’d of my marrow.

“O came you by yon water-side?
Pu’d you the rose or lilly?
Or came you by yon meadow green?
Or saw you my sweet Willy?”

She sought him east, she sought him west,
She sought him brade and narrow;
Sine, in the clifting of a craig,
She found him drownd in Yarrow.

Old Ballad

Clifting: *fissure*
Heght: *promised*

Marrow: *sweetheart*
Sine: *then*

Twin’d: *deprived*

EDWARD, EDWARD

“WHY dois your brand sae drap wi bluid,
Edward, Edward?

Why dois your brand sae drap wi bluid,
And why sae sad gang yee O?”

“O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
Mither, mither,

O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
And I had nae mair bot hee O.”

“Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
Edward, Edward,

Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
My deir son, I tell thee O.”

“O I hae killed my reid-roan steid,
Mither, mither,

O I hae killed my reid-roan steid,
That erst was sae fair and frie O.”

“Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Edward, Edward,

Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Sum other dule ye drie O.”

“O I hae killed my fadir deir,
Mither, mither,

O I hae killed my fadir deir,
Alas, and wae is mee O!”

“And whatten penance wul ye drie for that,
Edward, Edward?

Drie: *suffer*

Dule: *grief*

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And whatten penance wul ye drie for that?

My deir son, now tell me O."

"Ile set my feit in yonder boat,

Mither, mither,

Ile set my feit in yonder boat,

And Ile fare ovir the sea O."

"And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,

Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,

That were sae fair to see O?"

"Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,

Mither, mither,

Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,

For here nevir mair maun I bee O."

"And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,

Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,

Whan ye gang ovir the sea O?"

"The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,

Mither, mither,

The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,

For thame nevir mair wul I see O."

"And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir,

Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir?

My deir son, now tell me O."

"The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,

Mither, mither,

The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,

Sic counseils ye gave to me O."

Old Ballad

THE TWA CORBIES

AS I was walking all alane
 I heard twa corbies making a mane;
 The tane unto the t'other say,
 "Where sall we gang and dine to-day?"

"—In behint yon auld fail dyke,
 I wot there lies a new-slain Knight;
 And naebody kens that he lies there,
 But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair.

"His hound is to the hunting gane,
 His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
 His lady's ta'en another mate,
 So we may make our dinner sweet.

"Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
 And I'll pick out his bonny blue een;
 Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair
 We'll theek our nest when it grows bare.

"Mony a one for him makes mane,
 But nane sall ken where he is gane;
 O'er his white banes, when they are bare,
 The wind sall blaw for evermair."

Old Ballad

Corbies: *ravens*
 Fail: *turf*

Hause-bane: *neck-bone*
 Mane: *remark, moan*

Tane: *one*
 Theek: *thatch*

THOMAS RYMER

TRUE Thomas lay oer yond grassy bank,
 And he beheld a ladie gay,
 A ladie that was brisk and bold,
 Come riding oer the fernie brae.

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
 Her mantel of the velvet fine,
 At ilka tett of her horse's mane
 Hung fifty silver bells and nine.

True Thomas he took off his hat,
 And bowed him low down till his knee:
 "All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
 For your peer on earth I never did see."

"O no, O no, True Thomas," she says,
 "That name does not belong to me;
 I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
 And I'm come here for to visit thee.

"Harp and carp, Thomas," she said,
 "Harp and carp along wi me,
 And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
 Sure of your bodie I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,
 That weird shall never daunt me;"
 Sync he has kissed her rosy lips,
 All underneath the Eildon Tree.

Brae: *hill*
 Carp: *chant tales*

Syne: *then*
 Tett: *lock*

Weird: *fate*

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“But ye maun go wi me now, Thomas,
True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
For ye maun serve me seven years,
Thro weel or wae as may chance to be.”

She turned about her milk-white steed,
And took True Thomas up behind,
And aye wheneer her bridle rang,
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

For forty days and forty nights
He wade thro red blude to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon,
But heard the roaring of the sea.

O they rade on, and further on,
Until they came to a garden green:
“Light down, light down, ye ladie free,
Some of that fruit let me pull to thee.”

“O no, O no, True Thomas,” she says,
“That fruit maun not be touched by thee,
For a’ the plagues that are in hell
Light on the fruit of this countrie.

“But I have a loaf here in my lap,
Likewise a bottle of claret wine,
And now ere we go farther on,
We’ll rest awhile, and ye may dine.”

When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
“Lay down your head upon my knee,”
The lady sayd, “ere we climb yon hill,
And I will show you fairlies three.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“O see not ye yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho after it but few enquires.

“And see not ye that braid, braid road
That lies across yon lillie leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven.

“And see not ye that bonny road
Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where you and I this night maun gae.

“But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
Whatever you may hear or see,
For gin ae word you should chance to speak,
You will neer get back to your ain countrie.”

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

Old Ballad

Even: *smooth*

Leven: *glad*

Lillie: *lovely*

II LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
 Alone and palely loitering!
 The sedge has withered from the lake,
 And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms!
 So haggard and so woe-begone?
 The squirrel's granary is full,
 And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
 With anguish moist and fever dew,
 And on thy cheeks a fading rose
 Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
 Full beautiful—a faery's child,
 Her hair was long, her foot was light,
 And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
 She looked at me as she did love,
 And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long,
 For sidelong would she bend, and sing
 A faery's song.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
“I love thee true.”

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill's side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—“La Belle Dame Sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!”

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

John Keats

12 THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

ST. AGNES' EVE—Ah, bitter chill it was!
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
 The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
 Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer old,
 Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
 Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
 And back returneth, meager, barefoot, wan,
 Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
 The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
 Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails:¹
 Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
 He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
 To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
 And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
 Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;
 But no—already had his deathbell rung;
 The joys of all his life were said and sung:
 His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
 Another way he went, and soon among
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

¹ Garments.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft:
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their
breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline;
The music, yearning like a god in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired; not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was elsewhere:
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwinked with faery fancy; all amort,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things
have been.

He ventures in: let no buzzed whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this armchair sit,
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

He followed through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
And as she muttered "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes’ Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch’s sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes’ Eve!
God’s help! my lady fair the conjurer plays
This very night; good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I’ve mickle time to grieve.”

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wond’rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady’s purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
“A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.”

“I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,”
Quoth Porphyro: “O may I ne’er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than wolves
and bears."

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never missed." Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.”

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
The dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware:
With silver tapers light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed and fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

A casement high and triple arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven: Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the popped warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray;¹
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushed carpet, silent, stepped,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast
she slept.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half-anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,

¹ A Christian who found himself in unfriendly Mohammedan lands would cherish and protect his prayer-book with tender piety.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

These delicates he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
“And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes’ sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.”

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—’twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam:
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady’s eyes;
So mused awhile, entoil’d in woofed phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called, “La belle dame sans merci:”
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

“Ah, Porphyro!” said she, “but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tunable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.”

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven’s deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost wind blows
Like Love’s alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes’ moon hath set.

’Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet:
“This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!”
’Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
“No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.”

“My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty’s shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think’st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

“Hark! ’tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
The bloated wassaillers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o’er the southern moors I have a home for thee.”

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meager face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

John Keats

13

CHRISTABEL¹

I

'TIS the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

¹ The poem as projected was to consist of five parts. Two parts only were completed. Of these the whole of the first and a brief passage near the beginning of the second are here reprinted.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff, which
From her kennel beneath the rock
Maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not overloud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray;
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest misletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.

What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made the white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandaled were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

Mary mother, save me now!
(Said Christabel) And who art thou?

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!
Said Christabel, How camest thou here?
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:

My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she),
And help a wretched maid to flee.

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine:
O well, bright dame, may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall.

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me.

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side,
Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!
Alas, alas! said Geraldine,
I cannot speak for weariness.
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel, the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
O softly tread, said Christabel,
My father seldom sleepeth well.

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room.
As still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet;
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers.

And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?
Christabel answered—Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the gray-haired friar tell
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!
I would, said Geraldine, she were!
But soon with altered voice, said she—
Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee.
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she:
Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me.

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
Alas! said she, this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath 'wildered you!
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, 'Tis over now!

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright:
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countree.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.

Quoth Christabel, So let it be!
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.
But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close;
So halfway from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems halfway
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the Maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,

Ah well-a-day!

And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair;
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in
charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air.

CONCLUSION

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Amid the jagged shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,
Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh, call it fair not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah, woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still,
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!
Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell!
And see! the lady Christabel

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes! and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere,
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call;
For the blue sky bends over all!

II

The lovely maid and the lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might besem so bright a dame!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between.
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face;
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

O then the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He would proclaim it far and wide,
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they, who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy!—
And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men!
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

14

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away,
Down and away below!
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow,
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray;
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
“Margaret! Margaret!”
Children’s voices should be dear
(Call once more!) to a mother’s ear;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
"Mother dear, we cannot stay;
The wild white horses foam and fret."
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-walled town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore;
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day:
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine:
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once!) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea;
She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little gray church on the shore to-day.
'Twill be Easter-time in the world, ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee."
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;
Come!" I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were sealed to the holy book!
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!
Down to the depths of the sea!
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!"
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden;
A long, long sigh
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.
Come away, away, children;
Come, children, come down!
The hoarse wind blows colder;
Lights shine in the town.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing: "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanched sands a gloom;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hillside:
And then come back down,
Singing: "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

Matthew Arnold

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS
THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splashed wretchedly;
And the wet dripped from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.

By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads crossed; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises.
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobbed, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they neared that old soaked hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinned from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then

While Robert turned round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
“Nay, love, ’tis scarcely two to one;
At Poitiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after us.”

But: “O!” she said,

“My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He answered not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off:
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and: "No!"
She said, and turned her head away,
As there was nothing else to say,
And everything was settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands;
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair willful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God’s help: ah!” she said,
“Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest.”

“Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,”
Said Godmar, “would I fail to tell
All that I know?” “Foul lies,” she said.
“Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God’s head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you:
‘Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!’
Eh!—gag me Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it. So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!”

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turned upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sighed quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
“I will not.” Straightway Godmar’s head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turned
Most sharply round, and his face burned.

For Robert, both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seemed to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reached out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor gray lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brushed them.

With a start

Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert’s throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar’s sheath, his hand
In Robert’s hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert’s head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moaned as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turned grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turned again and said:
“So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

William Morris

16

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY¹

BROAD the forests stood (I read) on the hills of
Linteged;
And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary
wood,

Like a full heart having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west;

And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt large and red on the towers of Linteged,—
Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery
light,

While the castle stood in shade.

There the castle stood up black with the red sun at its back,
Like a sullen, smoldering pyre with a top that flickers fire
When the wind is on its track.

¹ The prologue and epilogue of the poem, together with the parenthetical burden ("Toll slowly"), which appears between the first and second lines of every stanza, are here omitted.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,
And the castle seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights
 had stood
And to-night was near its fall.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride
 did come,
One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the
 doors,
“May good angels bless our home.”

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,
Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile of
 youth
Did light outward its own sighs!

’Twas a duke’s fair orphan girl, and her uncle’s ward—
 the earl,
Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry
 gold,
To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood,
Unto both these lords of Leigh spake she out right sovrantly,
“My will runneth as my blood.

“And while this same blood makes red this same right hand’s
 veins,” she said,
“’Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a lord of Leigh,
 But Sir Guy of Linteged.”

The old earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for willful
 youth,—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and
small

For so large a will in sooth.”

She, too, smiled by that same sign; but her smile was cold
and fine.

“Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth the
hold

Of thy son, good uncle mine.”

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in
his teeth,—

“He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she
loathed,

Let the life come, or the death.”

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father’s child might
rise,—

“Thy hound’s blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly
heel,” quoth she,

“And he moans not where he lies;

“But a woman’s will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward—
By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and
dowered lady,

I deny you wife and ward!”

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty tread.
Ere the midnight bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night storm rode amain:
Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the
turf,

In the pauses of the rain.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued
 amain,
Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling, hoof
 on hoof,
In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of
 might,
And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

“Dost thou fear?” he said at last. “Nay,” she answered him
 in haste,—
“Not such death as we could find: only life with one behind.
Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!”

Up the mountain wheeled the steed, girth to ground, and fet-
 locks spread,
Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered,
 down the banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed
 about,
In the courtyard rose the cry, “Live the duchess and Sir Guy!”
But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane, and kissed
 his neck,—
“I had happier died by thee than lived on a Lady Leigh,”
Were the first words she did speak.

But a three-months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and
 to-day,
When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall
To recapture Duchess May.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back;
And a fortnight's siege is done; and, except the duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so gray
of blee,
And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white gnashing of
his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud, "So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess
May!
Look thy last upon that sun! if thou seest to-morrow's one
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

"Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound, save that moaning of the
hound?
Thou and I have parted troth; yet I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past com-
pare;
Yet thine old love's falchion brave is as strong a thing to have
As the will of lady fair.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove! If a wife's name thee behove,
Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid
the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth thou and I will call back
troth;
He shall altar be and priest; and he will not cry at least,
'I forbid you, I am loath!'

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail:
‘Little hand and muckle gold’ close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did to prevail.”

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—
“Tower is strong, and will is free: thou canst boast, my Lord
of Leigh;
But thou boastest little wit.”

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she blushed right womanly:
She blushed half from her disdain, half her beauty was so
plain;
“Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!”

Straight she called her maidens in,—“Since ye gave me blame
herein,
That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

“It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand away:
Bring the gold, and bring the gem; we will keep bride-state
in them
While we keep the foe at bay.

“On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth, and crown
it fair:
I would look in purple pall from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that’s there!”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west:
On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate:
They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there-
withal
With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon shivered, snapped upon the
stone:
“Sword,” he thought with inward laugh, “ill thou servest for a
staff
When thy nobler use is done!

“Sword, thy nobler use is done! tower is lost, and shame
begun.
If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt, or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

“If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall;
But if *I* die here alone,—then I die who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

“Five true friends lie, for my sake, in the moat and in the
brake;
Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast:
And not one of these will wake.

“So, no more of this shall be. Heartblood weighs too heavily;
And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the
brave
Heaped around and over me.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted
faith;

Since my pale young sister’s cheeks blush like rose when Ron-
ald speaks,

Albeit never a word she saith,—

“These shall never die for me: lifeblood falls too heavily.
And if *I* die here apart, o’er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

“When the foe hath heard it said, ‘Death holds Guy of
Linteged,’

That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessèd, blessèd
thing

Shall the stone be at its head.

“Then my friends shall pass out free and shall bear my mem-
ory;

Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed
bride,

Whose sole sin was love of me.

“With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her,
and entreat,

And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting
head

While her tears drop over it.

“She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her woman’s
prayers;

But her heart’s young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief! once I vowed thee my
belief

That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets in com-
pleteness!

Now my May-day seemeth brief.”

All these silent thoughts did swim o’er his eyes grown strange
and dim,

Till his true men in the place wished they stood there face to
face

With the foe, instead of him.

“One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do
and dare!

Tower must fall, and bride be lost: swear me service worth the
cost!”

Bold they stood around to swear.

“Each man clasp my hand, and swear, by the deed we failed
in there,

Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-
night!”

Pale they stood around to swear.

“One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to
do and dare!

Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you
all,

Guide him up the turret stair.

“Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height;
Once in love, and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and
far:

He shall bear me far to-night.”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Then his men looked to and fro when they heard him speaking so.

“’Las! the noble heart,” they thought: “he, in sooth, is grief-distraught:

Would we stood here with the foe!”

But a fire flashed from his eye ’twixt their thought and their reply,—

“Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here must ride fast

As we wish our foes to fly.”

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,

Past the court, and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors;

But they goad him up the stair.

Then, from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May repair:

“Tell me now what is your need,” said the lady, “of this steed,

That ye goad him up the stair?”

Calm she stood; unbodkined through fell her dark hair to her shoe;

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

“Get thee back, sweet Duchess May; hope is gone like yesterday:

One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows wild of speech—

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“In the east tower, high’st of all, loud he cries for steed from stall:

‘He would ride as far,’ quoth he, ‘as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle wall.’

“And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof
did fall—

Wifely prayer meets deathly need: may the sweet heavens hear
thee plead

If he rides the castle wall!”

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the
floor,

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

“Get thee in, thou soft ladye! here is never a place for thee!
Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its
moan

May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.”

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,
Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to
look

Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in with pride her own tears i’ the stone
beside:

“Go to, faithful friends, go to! judge no more what ladies do,
No, nor how their lords may ride!”

Then the good steed’s rein she took, and his neck did kiss
and stroke:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the
stair

For the love of her sweet look.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,
Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her
treading,

Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof
did fall,—

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently,
And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her
eyes

Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife, and the sweet saints
bless thy life!

In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife."

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun;
But by all my womanhood, which is proved so true and good,
I will never do this one.

"Now by womanhood's degree and by wifehood's verity,
In this hour, if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardie,
If, this hour, on castle wall can be room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*.

“So the sweet saints with me be!” (did she utter solemnly)
“If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*.”

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter-well,—
“Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other
eves,
To hear chime a vesper bell?”

She clung closer to his knee—“Ay, beneath the cypress-tree!
Mock me not; for elsewhere than along the greenwood fair
Have I ridden fast with thee.

“Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry kinsman’s
house:
What! and would you men should reck that I dared more for
love’s sake
As a bride than as a spouse?

“What! and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,
That a bride may keep your side while through castle gate
you ride,
Yet eschew the castle wall?”

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her
suing,
With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling-in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Twice he wrung her hands in twain; but the small hands closed
again.

Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his
track

With a frantic clasp and strain.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and
door,

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of “Kill!”
and “Flee!”

Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain; but they closed and clung
again,

While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the
rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild, and she clung mute, with her shuddering lips
half shut;

Her head fallen as half in swoond, hair and knee swept on
the ground,

She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery coping-
stone;

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind,
Whence a hundred feet went down;

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank be-
strode,—

“Friends and brothers, save my wife! Pardon, sweet, in change
for life;

But I ride alone to God.”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Straight, as if the holy name had upbreathed her like a flame,
She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sate in sight.
By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at
rest,—
“Ring,” she cried, “O vesper-bell, in the beechwood’s old
chappelle,
But the passing-bell rings best!”

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw loose,
in vain;
For the horse, in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised
in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils curdle in;
Now he shivers head and hoof, and the flakes of foam fall
off,
And his face grows fierce and thin;

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go;
And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below;

And, “Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,” still she cried, “i’ the
old chapelle!”
Then back-toppling, crashing back, a dead weight flung out to
wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

I

ON either side the river lie
 Long fields of barley and of rye,
 That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
 And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-towered Camelot;
 And up and down the people go,
 Gazing where the lilies blow
 Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
 Little breezes dusk and shiver
 Thro' the wave that runs for ever
 By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
 Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
 Overlook a space of flowers,
 And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
 Slide the heavy barges trailed
 By slow horses; and unhailed
 The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
 Skimming down to Camelot;
 But who hath seen her wave her hand?
 Or at the casement seen her stand?
 Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to towered Camelot;
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott."

II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot;
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
 And music, went to Camelot;
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
"I am half sick of shadows," said
 The Lady of Shalott.

III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The bridle bells rang merrily
 As he rode down to Camelot;
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
 Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
 As he rode down to Camelot;
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“The curse is come upon me,” cried
The Lady of Shalott.

IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river’s dim expanse
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro’ the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly

Turned to towered Camelot.

For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,

The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,

Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,

The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,

All the knights at Camelot:

But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,

The Lady of Shalott."

Alfred Tennyson

18 THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

GUENEVERE, the wife of King Arthur, being charged with adultery and threatened with the punishment of death, speaks in her own defence.

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
“O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

“God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right, such great lords; still

“Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

“The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“ ‘One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever; which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

“ ‘Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!’
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

“A great God’s angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

“Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God’s commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

“And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

“After a shivering half-hour you said:
‘God help! heaven’s color, the blue’; and he said, ‘hell.’
Perhaps you would then roll upon your bed,

“And cry to all good men that loved you well,
‘Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known’;
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

“Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.”

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men’s ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

“It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur’s court: at Christmastime
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

“ ‘Son of King Ban of Benwick’ seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O’er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme,

“Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“And in the summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down: autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

“However often spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

“To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

“Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold, my judges, then the cloths were brought;
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

“Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur’s great name and his little love;
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

“That which I deemed would ever round me move,
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

“Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

“Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven?
So day by day it grew, as if one should

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven

“Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

“Back, with the hair like seaweed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o’ercast,

“In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

“From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting:

“I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

“I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

“Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With wary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darkened fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound: why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen: In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remembered bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before: and now so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

“Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinned this way, straight her conscience sears;

“And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps:
Gauwaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly.

“Do I not see how God’s dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

“Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head severed in that awful drouth

“Of pity that drew Agravaine’s fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

“Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

“Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy, how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

“So: let God’s justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs.” . . .

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Guenevere recalls and answers a charge which had been brought against her by the spying Mellyagraunce, and now proceeds to relate how disdainfully Launcelot had dealt with him.

. . . “Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

“Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said:
‘Slayer of unarmed men, here is a chance!

“ ‘Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

“ ‘For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.’

“He struck his hands together o’er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and groveled at his feet,
And groaned at being slain so young: ‘At least,’

“My knight said, ‘rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-armed will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!’ then I weet,

“Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave’s face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

“The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

“And fast leapt caitiff’s sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it and swung it; that was all the fight;

“Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wondered how the fire, while I should stand,

“And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

“That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

“With all his wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes
Wept all away to gray, may bring some sword

“To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Yea also at my full heart’s strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

“The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvelously colored gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

“And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses; will you dare
When you have looked a little on my brow,

“To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

“For ever? am I not a gracious proof? —
‘But in your chamber Launcelot was found’—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

“When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
‘O true as steel, come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

“‘Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

“‘The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“ ‘If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over-much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight:

“ ‘For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

“ ‘So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

“ ‘Just for one night.’ Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said, ‘Come?’ There was one less than three

“ ‘In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

“ ‘I looked at Launcelot’s face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

“ ‘And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o’er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

“ ‘My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot’s breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said . . .

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will: what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

“How Launcelot stilled their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine, all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

“Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

“All I have said is truth, by Christ’s dear tears.”
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turned sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother’s trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes’ lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

William Morris

19

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice. One low light betwixt them burned
Blurred by the creeping mist, for all abroad,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance. For this
He chilled the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tampered with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpened by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mocked the May,
Had been—their wont—a-maying and returned,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climbed to the high top of the garden wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best
Enid and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couched, and as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot plucked him by the heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the prince tho' marred with dust,
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn. For in those days
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But, if a man were halt, or hunched, in him
By those whom God had made full-limbed and tall,
Scorn was allowed as part of his defect,
And he was answered softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot holp
To raise the prince, who rising twice or thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went;
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laughed
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shuddered, as the village wife who cries,
"I shudder, some one steps across my grave";
Then laughed again, but faintlier, for indeed
She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye.
Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
Held her awake; or if she slept she dreamed
An awful dream, for then she seemed to stand
On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made at her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it till it touched her, and she turned—
When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
And blackening, swallowed all the land, and in it
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
And all this trouble did not pass but grew,
Till even the clear face of the guileless King,
And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane; and at the last she said:
“O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
And if we meet again some evil chance
Will make the smoldering scandal break and blaze
Before the people and our lord the King.”
And Lancelot ever promised, but remained,
And still they met and met. Again she said,
“O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.”
And then they were agreed upon a night—
When the good King should not be there—to meet
And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice,
"Traitor, come out, ye are trapped at last," aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurled him headlong, and he fell
Stunned and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still. Then she, "The end is come,
And I am shamed for ever"; and he said:
"Mine be the shame, mine was the sin; but rise,
And fly to my strong castle overseas.
There will I hide thee till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world."
She answered: "Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
Unwedded; yet rise now, and let us fly,
For I will draw me into sanctuary,
And bide my doom." So Lancelot got her horse,
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kissed, and parted weeping; for he passed,
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan.
And in herself she moaned, "Too late, too late!"
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
A blot in heaven, the raven, flying high,
Croaked, and she thought, "He spies a field of death,
For now the heathen of the Northern Sea,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,
Begin to slay the folk and spoil the land.”

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
There to the nuns, and said, “Mine enemies
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it till her time
To tell you”; and her beauty, grace, and power
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns,
Nor with them mixed nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lured her from herself; but now,
This night, a rumor wildly blown about
Came that Sir Modred had usurped the realm
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot. Then she thought,
“With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me,” and bowed down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who brooked
No silence, brake it, uttering “Late! so late!
What hour, I wonder, now?” and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her: “Late, so late!”
Which when she heard, the Queen looked up and said,
“O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.”
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

"Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light had we; for that we do repent,
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light! so late! and dark and chill the night!
O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet!
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.
Then said the little novice, prattling to her:

"O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words—the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows, for they do not flow
From evil done; right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
And weighing find them less; for gone is he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
And Modred whom he left in charge of all,
The traitor—Ah, sweet lady, the King's grief
For his own self, and his own Queen and realm,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours!
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great;
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done;
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good.
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
That, howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud;
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King it could not be."

Then to her own sad heart muttered the Queen,
"Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?"
But openly she answered, "Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?"

"Yea," said the maid, "this all is woman's grief,
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders, there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen."

Then thought the Queen within herself again,
"Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?"
But openly she spake and said to her,
"O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?"

To whom the little novice garrulously:
"Yea, but I know; the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it,
And rode thereto from Lyonesse; and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turning—there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west.
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them as the thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed.
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy-circle wheeled and broke
Flying, and linked again, and wheeled and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dreamed; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he longed for served
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shouldered the spigot, straddling on the butts
While the wine ran; so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen."

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,
"Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,
Spirits and men. Could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fall'n upon the realm?"

To whom the novice garrulously again:
"Yea, one, a bard, of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Even in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame.
So said my father—and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As wellnigh more than man, and railed at those
Who called him the false son of Gorloïs.
For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,
And that was Arthur, and they fostered him
Till he by miracle was approven King;
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth; and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song
He faltered, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turned and reeled, and would have fallen,
But that they stayed him up; nor would he tell
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?"

Then thought the Queen, "Lo! they have set her on,
Our simple-seeming abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me," and bowed her head nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasped hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
Full often, "and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me too
Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
Killed in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?"

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Then the pale Queen looked up and answered her:
"Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly mannered men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature and of noble mind."

"Yea," said the maid, "be manners such fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold
Less noble, being, as all rumor runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world."

To which a mournful answer made the Queen:
"O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,
What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,
And weep for her who drew him to his doom."

"Yea," said the little novice, "I pray for both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen."

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harmed where she would heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried:
 "Such as thou art be never maiden more
 For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
 And play upon and harry me, petty spy
 And traitress!" When that storm of anger brake
 From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
 White as her veil, and stood before the Queen
 As tremulously as foam upon the beach
 Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
 And when the Queen had added, "Get thee hence!"
 Fled frightened. Then that other left alone
 Sighed, and began to gather heart again,
 Saying in herself: "The simple, fearful child
 Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,
 Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
 But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent!
 For what is true repentance but in thought—
 Not even in inmost thought to think again
 The sins that made the past so pleasant to us?
 And I have sworn never to see him more,
 To see him more."

And ev'n in saying this,
 Her memory from old habit of the mind
 Went slipping back upon the golden days
 In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
 Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
 Ambassador, to yield her to his lord
 Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
 Of his and her retinue moving, they,
 Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
 And sport and tilts and pleasure,—for the time
 Was may-time, and as yet no sin was dreamed,—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Rode under groves that looked a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seemed the heavens upbreking thro' the earth,
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crowned the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sighed to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contained, and passionless, not like him,
"Not like my Lancelot"—while she brooded thus
And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, "The King!" She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet
Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And groveled with her face against the floor
There with her milk-white arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King,
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but, though changed, the King's:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honored, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o’er the Northern Sea;
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come—from him,
From waging bitter war with him; and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight. But many a knight was slain;
And many more and all his kith and kin
Clave to him and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harmed.
Fear not; thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have erred not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Even for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinned.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

For when the Romans left us, and their law
Relaxed its hold upon us, and the ways
Were filled with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redressed a random wrong,
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honor his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, "Lo, mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy!"
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
 Sinned also, till the loathsome opposite
 Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
 And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
 I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
 Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
 How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
 To sit once more within his lonely hall,
 And miss the wonted number of my knights,
 And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
 As in the golden days before thy sin.
 For which of us who might be left could speak
 Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
 And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
 Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
 And I should evermore be vexed with thee
 In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
 Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
 For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,
 Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
 I am not made of so slight elements.
 Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
 I hold that man the worst of public foes
 Who either for his own or children's sake,
 To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
 Whom he knows false abide and rule the house:
 For being thro' his cowardice allowed
 Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
 She like a new disease, unknown to men,
 Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
 Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
 The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
 With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
 Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people and their bane!"

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the war-horse neighed
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

"Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes;
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death—
When first I learned thee hidden here,—is past.
The pang—which, while I weighed thy heart with one
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinned, and I,
Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives! do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-molded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's; nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinned; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

'I loathe thee'; yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow.
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,
'Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more—
Farewell!"

And while she groveled at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head
Perceived the waving of his hands that blessed.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: "Peradventure," so she thought,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“If I might see his face, and not be seen.”
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lowered,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel’s, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turned; and more and more
The moony vapor rolling round the King,
Who seemed the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretched out her arms and cried aloud,
“O Arthur!” there her voice brake suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Falls in mid-air, but gathering at the base
Remakes itself, and flashes down the vale—
Went on in passionate utterance:

“Gone—my lord!
Gone thro’ my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answered his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution. He, the King,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Called me polluted. Shall I kill myself?
 What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
 If soul be soul, nor can I kill my shame;
 No, nor by living can I live it down.
 The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
 The months will add themselves and make the years,
 The years will roll into the centuries,
 And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
 I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
 Let the world be; that is but of the world—
 What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
 Except he mocked me when he spake of hope;
 His hope he called it; but he never mocks,
 For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
 And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
 My wickedness to him, and left me hope
 That in mine own heart I can live down sin
 And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
 Before high God! Ah great and gentle lord,
 Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
 Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
 To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
 Full easily all impressions from below,
 Would not look up, or half-despised the height
 To which I would not or I could not climb—
 I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
 That pure severity of perfect light—
 I yearned for warmth and color which I found
 In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,
 Thou art the highest and most human too,
 Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
 Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
 Now—ere he goes to the great battle? none!
 Myself must tell him in that purer life,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known;
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another."

Here her hand
Grasped made her veil her eyes. She looked and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,
"Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?"
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and said:

"Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O shut me round with narrowing nunnery walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying, 'Shame!'
I must not scorn myself; he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be prayed for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransomed us, and haler too than I;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
And so wear out in alms-deed and in prayer
The somber close of that voluptuous day
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King."

She said. They took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing, "Is it yet too late?"
Dwelt with them, till in time their abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen abbess, there, an abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an abbess, passed
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

Alfred Tennyson

20

MORTE D'ARTHUR

SO all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall nevermore, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it like a king:
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.”

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
“It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.”

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewelry. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as besemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,

“And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost forever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ‘King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.’
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were lost.”

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
“What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?”

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
“I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To whom King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho’ I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.”

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
“My end draws nigh; ’tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.”

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro’ his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O’er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro’ the place of tombs.

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, “Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.”

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thoughts drove him, like a goad.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armèd heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from
 them rose

A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.
Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parched with dust;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.”

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

Alfred Tennyson

21

LOVE

ALL thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I
Live o'er again that happy hour,
When midway on the mount I lay
Beside the ruined tower.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The moonshine stealing o'er the scene
Had blended with the lights of eve;
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve!

She leaned against the armèd man,
The statue of the armèd knight;
She stood and listened to my lay,
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,
My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
She loves me best whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,
I sang an old and moving story—
An old rude song, that suited well
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a fitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace;
For well she knew I could not choose
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the Knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand;
And that for ten long years he wooed
The Lady of the Land.

I told her how he pined; and ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love
Interpreted my own.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

She listened with a flitting blush,
 With downcast eyes and modest grace;
And she forgave me, that I gazed
 Too fondly on her face.

But when I told the cruel scorn
 That crazed that bold and lovely Knight,
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,
 Nor rested day nor night;

That sometimes from the savage den,
 And sometimes from the darksome shade,
And sometimes starting up at once
 In green and sunny glade

There came and looked him in the face
 An angel beautiful and bright;
And that he knew it was a Fiend,
 This miserable Knight!

And that, unknowing what he did,
 He leaped amid a murderous band,
And saved from outrage worse than death
 The Lady of the Land;

And how she wept, and clasped his knees;
 And how she tended him in vain;
And ever strove to expiate
 The scorn that crazed his brain;

And that she nursed him in a cave,
 And how his madness went away,
When on the yellow forest-leaves
 A dying man he lay;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

—His dying words—but when I reached
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,
My faltering voice and pausing harp
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve;
The music and the doleful tale,
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An undistinguishable throng,
And gentle wishes long subdued,
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,
She blushed with love and virgin shame;
And, like the murmur of a dream,
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved—she stepped aside,
As conscious of my look she stept—
Then suddenly, with timorous eye
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,
She pressed me with a meek embrace;
And bending back her head, looked up,
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly 'twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel, than see,
The swelling of her heart.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,
And told her love with virgin pride;
And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous Bride.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

22

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

IF from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Whom I already loved; not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, He heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm that drives

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The traveler to shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form: this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labor did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE,¹ a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;

¹ Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.
[Author's note.]

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
"When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"

At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and moneys to the poor,
And, at his birthplace, built a chapel, floored
With marble which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.— After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mold.
I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived:
But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go."

At this the old Man paused;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
 Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
 "This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
 Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
 To see a better day. At eighty-four
 I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
 I will do mine.—I will begin again
 With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
 Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
 Will I without thee go again, and do
 All works which I was wont to do alone,
 Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
 Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
 With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—
 I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
 To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me
 Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
 What will be left to us!—But, I forget
 My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
 As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
 When thou art gone away, should evil men
 Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
 And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
 And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
 And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
 Mayst bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
 Who, being innocent, did for that cause
 Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
 When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
 A work which is not here: a covenant
 'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
 Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And bear thy memory with me to the grave.”

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
“The prettiest letters that were ever seen.”

Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet,
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named THE EVENING STAR
Is gone—the plowshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

William Wordsworth

THE BROTHERS

A brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms,
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practice may ride easy.

King Lear, Act i, Sc. 2.

He lets me feed with hinds,
Bars me the place of brother.

As You Like It, Act i, Sc. 1.

'Twas I, but 'tis not I: I do not shame
To tell you what I was, being what I am.

Ib., Act iv, Sc. 3.

THAN old George Fletcher, on the British coast,
Dwelt not a seaman who had more to boast;
Kind, simple, and sincere—he seldom spoke,
But sometimes sang and chorused, “*Hearts of Oak*”;
In dangers steady, with his lot content,
His days in labor and in love were spent.

He left a son so like him, that the old
With joy exclaimed, “ ’Tis Fletcher we behold”;
But to his brother when the kinsmen came,
And viewed his form, they grudged the father’s name.

George was a bold, intrepid, careless lad,
With just the failings that his father had;
Isaac was weak, attentive, slow, exact,
With just the virtues that his father lacked.

George lived at sea; upon the land a guest—
He sought for recreation, not for rest;
While, far unlike, his brother’s feeble form
Shrank from the cold, and shuddered at the storm;
Still with the seaman’s to connect his trade,
The boy was bound where blocks and ropes were made.

George, strong and sturdy, had a tender mind,
And was to Isaac pitiful and kind,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

A very father, till his art was gained,
And then a friend unwearied he remained:
He saw his brother was of spirit low,
His temper peevish, and his motions slow;
Not fit to bustle in a world, or make
Friends to his fortune for his merit's sake:
But the kind sailor could not boast the art
Of looking deeply in the human heart;
Else had he seen that this weak brother knew
What men to court, what objects to pursue;
That he to distant gain the way discerned,
And none so crooked but his genius learned.

Isaac was poor, and this the brother felt;
He hired a house, and there the landsman dwelt;
Wrought at his trade, and had an easy home,
For there would George with cash and comforts come;
And when they parted, Isaac looked around,
Where other friends and helpers might be found.

He wished for some port-place, and one might fall.
He wisely thought, if he should try for all;
He had a vote—and, were it well applied,
Might have its worth—and he had views beside;
Old Burgess Steel was able to promote
An humble man who served him with a vote;
For Isaac felt not what some tempers feel,
But bowed and bent the neck to Burgess Steel;
And great attention to a lady gave,
His ancient friend, a maiden spare and grave:
One whom the visage long and look demure
Of Isaac pleased—he seemed sedate and pure;
And his soft heart conceived a gentle flame
For her who waited on this virtuous dame:
Not an outrageous love, a scorching fire,
But friendly liking and chastised desire;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And thus he waited, patient in delay,
In present favor and in fortune's way.

George then was coasting—war was yet delayed,
And what he gained was to his brother paid;
Nor asked the seaman what he saved or spent:
But took his grog, wrought hard, and was content;
Till war awaked the land, and George began
To think what part became a useful man:
“Pressed, I must go; why then, ’tis better far
At once to enter like a British tar,
Than a brave captain and the foe to shun,
As if I feared the music of a gun.”

“Go not!” said Isaac—“You shall wear disguise.”
“What!” said the seaman, “clothe myself with lies?”
“O! but there’s danger.”—“Danger in the fleet?
You cannot mean, good brother, of defeat;
And other dangers I at land must share—
So now adieu! and trust a brother’s care.”

Isaac awhile demurred—but, in his heart,
So might he share, he was disposed to part:
The better mind will sometimes feel the pain
Of benefactions—favor is a chain;
But they the feeling scorn, and what they wish disdain;—
While beings formed in coarser mold will hate
The helping hand they ought to venerate;
No wonder George should in this cause prevail,
With one contending who was glad to fail:
“Isaac, farewell! do wipe that doleful eye;
Crying we came, and groaning we may die.
Let us do something ’twixt the groan and cry:
And hear me, brother, whether pay or prize,
One-half to thee I give and I devise;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

For thou hast oft occasion for the aid
Of learned physicians, and they will be paid:
Their wives and children men support, at sea,
And thou, my lad, art wife and child to me:
Farewell!—I go where hope and honor call,
Nor does it follow that who fights must fall.”

Isaac here made a poor attempt to speak,
And a huge tear moved slowly down his cheek;
Like Pluto's iron drop, hard sign of grace,
It slowly rolled upon the rueful face,
Forced by the striving will alone its way to trace.

Years fled—war lasted—George at sea remained,
While the slow landsman still his profits gained:
An humble place was vacant; he besought
His patron's interest, and the office caught,
For still the virgin was his faithful friend,
And one so sober could with truth commend,
Who of his own defects most humbly thought,
And their advice with zeal and reverence sought:
Whom thus the mistress praised, the maid approved,
And her he wedded whom he wisely loved.

No more he needs assistance—but, alas!
He fears the money will for liquor pass;
Or that the seaman might to flatterers lend,
Or give support to some pretended friend:
Still he must write—he wrote, and he confessed
That, till absolved, he should be sore distressed;
But one so friendly would, he thought, forgive
The hasty deed—heaven knew how he should live;
“But you,” he added, “as a man of sense,
Have well considered danger and expense:
I ran, alas! into the fatal snare,
And now for trouble must my mind prepare;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And how, with children, I shall pick my way,
Through a hard world, is more than I can say:
Then change not, brother, your more happy state,
Or on the hazard long deliberate."

George answered gravely, "It is right and fit,
In all our crosses, humbly to submit:
Your apprehensions are unwise, unjust;
Forbear repining, and expel distrust."
He added, "Marriage was the joy of life,"
And gave his service to his brother's wife;
Then vowed to bear in all expense a part,
And thus concluded, "Have a cheerful heart."

Had the glad Isaac been his brother's guide,
In these same terms the seaman had replied;
At such reproofs the crafty landsman smiled,
And softly said, "This creature is a child."

Twice had the gallant ship a capture made,
And when in port the happy crew were paid,
Home went the sailor, with his pocket stored,
Ease to enjoy, and pleasure to afford;
His time was short, joy shone in every face,
Isaac half fainted in the fond embrace:
The wife resolved her honored guest to please,
The children clung upon their uncle's knees;
The grog went round, the neighbors drank his health,
And George exclaimed, "Ah! what to this is wealth?
Better," said he, "to bear a loving heart,
Than roll in riches—but we now must part!"

All yet is still—but hark! the winds o'ersweep
The rising waves, and howl upon the deep,
Ships late becalmed on mountain-billows ride—
So life is threatened, and so man is tried.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Ill were the tidings that arrived from sea,
The worthy George must now a cripple be;
His leg was lopped; and though his heart was sound,
Though his brave captain was with glory crowned,
Yet much it vexed him to repose on shore,
An idle log, and be of use no more:
True, he was sure that Isaac would receive
All of his brother that the foe might leave;
To whom the seaman his design had sent,
Ere from the port the wounded hero went:
His wealth and expectations told, he "knew
Wherein they failed, what Isaac's love would do;
That he the grog and cabin would supply,
Where George at anchor during life would lie."

The landsman read—and, reading, grew distressed:—
"Could he resolve t' admit so poor a guest?
Better at Greenwich might the sailor stay,
Unless his purse could for his comforts pay";
So Isaac judged, and to his wife appealed,
But yet acknowledged it was best to yield:
"Perhaps his pension, with what sums remain
Due or unsquandered, may the man maintain;
Refuse we must not."—With a heavy sigh
The lady heard, and made her kind reply:
"Nor would I wish it, Isaac, were we sure
How long his crazy building will endure;
Like an old house, that every day appears
About to fall—he may be propped for years;
For a few months, indeed, we might comply,
But these old battered fellows never die."

The hand of Isaac, George on entering took,
With love and resignation in his look;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Declared his comfort in the fortune past,
And joy to find his anchor safely cast;
"Call then my nephews, let the grog be brought,
And I will tell them how the ship was fought."

Alas! our simple seaman should have known,
That all the care, the kindness, he had shown,
Were from his brother's heart, if not his memory, flown:
All swept away to be perceived no more,
Like idle structures on the sandy shore;
The chance amusement of the playful boy,
That the rude billows in their rage destroy.

Poor George confessed, though loath the truth to find,
Slight was his knowledge of a brother's mind:
The vulgar pipe was to the wife offense,
The frequent grog to Isaac an expense;
Would friends like hers, she questioned, "choose to come,
Where clouds of poisoned fume defiled a room?
This could their lady friend, and Burgess Steel
(Teased with his worship's asthma), bear to feel?
Could they associate or converse with him—
A loud rough sailor with a timber limb?"

Cold as he grew, still Isaac strove to show,
By well-feigned care, that cold he could not grow;
And when he saw his brother look distressed,
He strove some petty comforts to suggest;
On his wife solely their neglect to lay,
And then t' excuse it, as a woman's way;
He too was chidden when her rules he broke,
And then she sickened at the scent of smoke.

George, though in doubt, was still consoled to find
His brother wishing to be reckoned kind:
That Isaac seemed concerned by his distress
Gave to his injured feelings some redress;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But none he found disposed to lend an ear
 To stories, all were once intent to hear:
 Except his nephew, seated on his knee,
 He found no creature cared about the sea;
 But George indeed—for George they called the boy,
 When his good uncle was their boast and joy—
 Would listen long, and would contend with sleep,
 To hear the woes and wonders of the deep;
 Till the fond mother cried—"That man will teach
 The foolish boy his loud and boisterous speech."
 So judged the father—and the boy was taught
 To shun the uncle, whom his love had sought.

The mask of kindness now but seldom worn,
 George felt each evil harder to be borne;
 And cried (vexation growing day by day),
 "Ah! brother Isaac!—What! I'm in the way!"
 "No! on my credit, look ye, no! but I
 Am fond of peace, and my repose would buy
 On any terms—in short, we must comply:
 My spouse had money—she must have her will—
 Ah! brother—marriage is a bitter pill."

George tried the lady—"Sister, I offend."
 "Me?" she replied—"O no!—you may depend
 On my regard—but watch your brother's way,
 Whom I, like you, must study and obey."

"Ah!" thought the seaman, "what a head was mine,
 That easy berth at Greenwich to resign!
 I'll to the parish"—but a little pride,
 And some affection, put the thought aside.

Now gross neglect and open scorn he bore
 In silent sorrow—but he felt the more:
 The odious pipe he to the kitchen took,
 Or strove to profit by some pious book.

When the mind stoops to this degraded state,
 New griefs will darken the dependent's fate;
 "Brother!" said Isaac, "you will sure excuse
 The little freedom I'm compelled to use:
 My wife's relations—(curse the haughty crew)—
 Affect such niceness, and such dread of you:
 You speak so loud—and they have natures soft—
 Brother—I wish——do go upon the loft!"

Poor George obeyed, and to the garret fled,
 Where not a being saw the tears he shed:
 But more was yet required, for guests were come,
 Who could not dine if he disgraced the room.
 It shocked his spirit to be esteemed unfit
 With an own brother and his wife to sit;
 He grew rebellious—at the vestry spoke
 For weekly aid——they heard it as a joke;
 "So kind a brother, and so wealthy——you
 Apply to us? ——No! this will never do:
 Good neighbor Fletcher," said the overseer,
 "We are engaged—you can have nothing here!"

George muttered something in despairing tone,
 Then sought his loft, to think and grieve alone;
 Neglected, slighted, restless on his bed,
 With heart half broken, and with scraps ill fed;
 Yet was he pleased, that hours for play designed
 Were given to ease his ever-troubled mind;
 The child still listened with increasing joy,
 And he was soothed by the attentive boy.

At length he sickened, and this duteous child
 Watched o'er his sickness, and his pains beguiled;
 The mother bade him from the loft refrain,
 But, though with caution, yet he went again;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And now his tales the sailor feebly told,
His heart was heavy, and his limbs were cold:
The tender boy came often to entreat
His good kind friend would of his presents eat,
Purloined or purchased, for he saw, with shame,
The food untouched that to his uncle came;
Who, sick in body and in mind, received
The boy's indulgence, gratified and grieved.

“Uncle will die!” said George—the piteous wife
Exclaimed, “She saw no value in his life;
But sick or well, to my commands attend,
And go no more to your complaining friend.”
The boy was vexed; he felt his heart reprove
The stern decree.—What! punished for his love!
No! he would go, but softly to the room,
Stealing in silence—for he knew his doom.

Once in a week the father came to say,
“George, are you ill?”—and hurried him away;
Yet to his wife would on their duties dwell,
And often cry, “Do use my brother well”:
And something kind, no question, Isaac meant,
Who took vast credit for the vague intent.
But truly kind, the gentle boy essayed
To cheer his uncle, firm, although afraid;
But now the father caught him at the door,
And, swearing—yes, the man in office swore,
And cried, “Away! How! brother, I'm surprised,
That one so old can be so ill advised:
Let him not dare to visit you again,
Your cursed stories will disturb his brain;
Is it not vile to court a foolish boy,
Your own absurd narrations to enjoy?

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

What! sullen!—ha! George Fletcher! you shall see,
Proud as you are, your bread depends on me!”

He spoke, and, frowning, to his dinner went,
Then cooled and felt some qualms of discontent;
And thought on times when he compelled his son
To hear these stories, nay, to beg for one:
But the wife’s wrath o’ercame the brother’s pain,
And shame was felt, and conscience rose in vain.

George yet stole up, he saw his uncle lie
Sick on the bed, and heard his heavy sigh:
So he resolved, before he went to rest,
To comfort one so dear and so distressed;
Then watched his time, but with a childlike art,
Betrayed a something treasured at his heart:
Th’ observant wife remark’d, “The boy is grown
So like your brother, that he seems his own;
So close and sullen! and I still suspect
They often meet—do watch them and detect.”

George now remarked that all was still at night,
And hastened up with terror and delight;
“Uncle!” he cried, and softly tapped the door;
“Do let me in”—but he could add no more;
The careful father caught him in the fact,
And cried,—“You serpent! is it thus you act?
Back to your mother!”—and with hasty blow,
He sent th’ indignant boy to grieve below;
Then at the door an angry speech began—
“Is this your conduct?—is it thus you plan?
Seduce my child, and make my house a scene
Of vile dispute——What is it that you mean?—
George, are you dumb? do learn to know your friends,
And think a while on whom your bread depends:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

What! not a word? be thankful I am cool—
 But, sir, beware, no longer play the fool;
 Come! brother, come! what is it that you seek
 By this rebellion?—Speak, you villain, speak!—
 Weeping! I warrant—sorrow makes you dumb:
 I'll ope your mouth, impostor! if I come:
 Let me approach—I'll shake you from the bed,
 You stubborn dog——O God! my brother's dead!”

Timid was Isaac, and in all the past
 He felt a purpose to be kind at last;
 Nor did he mean his brother to depart,
 Till he had shown this kindness of his heart:
 But day by day he put the cause aside,
 Induced by avarice, peevishness, or pride.
 But now awakened, from this fatal time
 His conscience Isaac felt, and found his crime:
 He raised to George a monumental stone,
 And there retired to sigh and think alone;
 An ague seized him, he grew pale, and shook—
 “So,” said his son, “would my poor uncle look.”—
 “And so, my child, shall I like him expire.”—
 “No! you have physic and a cheerful fire.”—
 “Unhappy sinner! yes, I'm well supplied
 With every comfort my cold heart denied.”
 He viewed his brother now, but not as one
 Who vexed his wife by fondness for her son;
 Not as with wooden limb, and seaman's tale,
 The odious pipe, vile grog, or humbler ale:
 He now the worth and grief alone can view
 Of one so mild, so generous, and so true;
 “The frank, kind brother, with such open heart,
 And I to break it—'twas a demon's part!”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

So Isaac now, as led by conscience, feels,
Nor his unkindness palliates or conceals.
“This is your folly,” said his heartless wife.
“Alas! my folly cost my brother’s life;
It suffered him to languish and decay,
My gentle brother, whom I could not pay,
And therefore left to pine, and fret his life away.”

He takes his son, and bids the boy unfold
All the good uncle of his feelings told,
All he lamented—and the ready tear
Falls as he listens, soothed, and grieved to hear.

“Did he not curse me, child?”—“He never cursed,
But could not breathe, and said his heart would burst.”—
“And so will mine.”—“Then, father, you must pray;
My uncle said it took his pains away.”

Repeating thus his sorrows, Isaac shows
That he, repenting, feels the debt he owes,
And from this source alone his every comfort flows.
He takes no joy in office, honors, gain;
They make him humble, nay, they give him pain;
“These from my heart,” he cries, “all feeling drove;
They made me cold to nature, dead to love”:
He takes no joy in home, but sighing, sees
A son in sorrow, and a wife at ease:
He takes no joy in office—see him now,
And Burgess Steel has but a passing bow;
Of one sad train of gloomy thoughts possessed,
He takes no joy in friends, in food, in rest—
Dark are the evil days, and void of peace the best,
As thus he lives, if living be to sigh,
And from all comforts of the world to fly,
Without a hope in life—without a wish to die.

George Crabbe

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early
morn;
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-
horn.

'Tis the place and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracks,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the west.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed;

When I dipped into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;
In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of
love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one
so young,

And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of
sighs—

All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me
wrong";

Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved
thee long."

Love took up the glass of time, and turned it in his glowing
hands;

Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords
with might;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, past in music out of
sight.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fullness of the
spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy? having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be; thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with
clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee
down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel
force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy; think not they are glazed
with wine.

Go to him, it is thy duty; kiss him, take his hand in thine.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought;
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter
thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my
hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of
youth!

Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of the
fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou less
unworthy proved—

Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was
loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter
fruit?

I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should
come

As the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging rookery
home.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move;
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth the poet
sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier
things.¹

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to
proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the
wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and
fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken
sleep,
To thy widowed marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt
weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phan-
tom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

¹ The poet is Dante. The passage alluded to may be seen in its context, below, p. 302.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy
pain.

Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

Oh, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his: it will be worthy of the two.

Oh, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's
heart.

"They were dangerous guides, the feelings—she herself was
not exempt—

Truly, she herself had suffered"—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like
these?

Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds are laid
with sound.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-
Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life:

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would
yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of
men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something
new;
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they
shall do.

For I dipped into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilot of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a
ghastly dew

From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing
warm,

With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-
storm;

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags
were furled

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm
in awe,

And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapped in universal law.

So I triumphed ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced
eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of
joint.

Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to
point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the
suns.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful
joys,

Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the
shore,

And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden
breast,

Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-
horn,

They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their
scorn.

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moldered string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a
thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure,
woman's pain—

Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower
brain.

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched with
mine,

Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some
retreat

Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starred;—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breaths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from
the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy-fruited
tree—

Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march
of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake
mankind.

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and
breathing space;

I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and they shall
run,

Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the
sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the
brooks,

Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are
wild,

But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime!
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in
Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us
range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves
of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age,—for mine I knew not,—help me as when life
begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh
the sun.

Oh, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof
tree fall.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Comes a vapor from the margin, blackening over heath and
holt,

Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

Alfred Tennyson

25

RIZPAH¹

17—

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother, come out to
me."

Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that I can-
not go?

For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon stares
at the snow.

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out of the
town.

The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing over the
down,

When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the creak of
the chain,

And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself drenched
with the rain.

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to fall?

I have taken them home, I have numbered the bones, I have
hidden them all.

¹ Founded upon fact. See the *Memoir* of Tennyson, by his son, vol. II, ch. XII.—Reprinted with the permission of The Macmillan Company.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so must it
lie.

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what have you
heard?

Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to darken
my eyes.

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you* know of the
night,

The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost and the
fright?

I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only made
for the day.

I have gathered my baby together—and now you may go your
way.

Nay,—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an old dying
wife.

But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour of life.
I kissed my boy in the prison, before he went out to die.
“They dared me to do it,” he said, and he never has told me
a lie.

I whipped him for robbing an orchard once when he was but
a child—

“The farmer dared me to do it,” he said; he was always so
wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never could
rest.

The King should have made him a soldier, he would have been
one of his best.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never would
let him be good;

They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he swore that
he would;

And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when all
was done

He flung it among his fellows—I'll none of it, said my son.

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers. I told them
my tale,

God's own truth—but they killed him, they killed him for
robbing the mail.

They hanged him in chains for a show—we had always borne
a good name—

To be hanged for a thief—and then put away—isn't that
enough shame?

Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set him so
high

That all the ships of the world could stare at him, passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls of
the air,

But not the black heart of the lawyer who killed him and
hanged him there.

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last good-
by;

They had fastened the door of his cell. "O mother!" I heard
him cry.

I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had something further to
say,

And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me away.
Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was
dead,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

They seized me and shut me up: they fastened me down on
my bed.

“Mother, O mother!”—he called in the dark to me year
after year—

They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I couldn’t
but hear;

And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid and
still

They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked their
will.

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it
a theft?—

My baby, the bones that had sucked me, the bones that had
laughed and had cried—

Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved
in my side.

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kissed ’em, I
buried ’em all—

I can’t dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard
wall.

My Willy ’ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment
’ill sound,

But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

They would scratch him up—they would hang him again on
the cursed tree.

Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord’s good will toward
men—

“Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord”—let me hear it
again;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering.” Yes, O yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Savior lives but to
bless.

He’ll never put on the black cap except for the worst of the
worst,

And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—and the
last may be first.

Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the shower and
the snow.

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never repented
his sin.

How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you* of his kin?
Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the downs
began,

The wind that ’ill wail like a child and the sea that ’ill moan
like a man?

Election, Election and Reprobation—it’s all very well.

But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in
Hell.

For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has looked into
my care,

And He means me, I’m sure, to be happy, with Willy, I know
not where.

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your desire:
Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the
fire?

I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me
alone—

You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice in the
wind—

The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call in the
dark,

And he calls to me now from the church and not from the
gibbet—for hark!

Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the
walls—

Willy—the moon's in a cloud——Good night. I am going.
He calls.

Alfred Tennyson

26

THE BORE¹

I T chanced that I, the other day,
Was sauntering up the Sacred Way,
And musing, as my habit is,
Some trivial random fantasies,
That for the time absorbed me quite,
When there comes running up a wight,
Whom only by his name I knew;
“Ha! my dear fellow, how d’ye do?”
Grasping my hand, he shouted. “Why,
As times go, pretty well,” said I;
“And you, I trust, can say the same.”
But after me as still he came,
“Sir, is there anything,” I cried,
“You want of me?” “Oh,” he replied,
“I’m just the man you ought to know;—
A scholar, author!” “Is it so?
For this I’ll like you all the more!”
Then, writhing to evade the bore,

¹ Satire IX. Translated by Sir Theodore Martin.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I quicken now my pace, now stop,
And in my servant's ear let drop
Some words, and all the while I feel
Bathed in cold sweat from head to heel.
"Oh, for a touch," I moaned in pain,
"Bolanus, of thy madcap vein,
To put this incubus to rout!"
As he went chattering on about
Whatever he descries or meets,
The crowds, the beauty of the streets,
The city's growth, its splendor, size.
"You're dying to be off," he cries;
For all the while I'd been stock dumb.
"I've seen it this half hour. But come,
Let's clearly understand each other;
It's no use making all this pother.
My mind's made up, to stick by you;
So where you go, there I go, too."
"Don't put yourself," I answered, "pray,
So very far out of your way.
I'm on the road to see a friend,
Whom you don't know, that's near his end,
Away beyond the Tiber far,
Close by where Cæsar's gardens are."
"I've nothing in the world to do,
And what's a paltry mile or two?
I like it so I'll follow you!"
Down dropped my ears on hearing this,
Just like a vicious jackass's,
That's loaded heavier than he likes;
But off anew my torment strikes,
"If well I know myself, you'll end
With making of me more a friend

Than Viscus, ay, or Varius; for
 Of verses who can run off more,
 Or run them off at such a pace?
 Who dance with such distinguished grace?
 And as for singing, zounds!" said he,
 "Hermogenes might envy me!"
 Here was an opening to break in.
 "Have you a mother, father, kin,
 To whom your life is precious?" "None;—
 I've closed the eyes of every one."
 Oh, happy they, I inly groan.
 Now I am left, and I alone.
 Quick, quick, dispatch me where I stand,
 Now is the direful doom at hand
 Which erst the Sabine beldam old,
 Shaking her magic urn, foretold
 In days when I was yet a boy:
 "Him shall no poisons fell destroy,
 Nor hostile sword in shock of war,
 Nor gout, nor colic, nor catarrh.
 In fullness of the time his thread
 Shall by a prate-apace be shred;
 So let him, when he's twenty-one,
 If he be wise, all babblers shun."

Now we were close to Vesta's fane.
 'Twas hard on ten, and he, my bane,
 Was bound to answer to his bail,
 Or lose his cause if he should fail.
 "Do, if you love me, step aside
 One moment with me here!" he cried.
 "Upon my life, indeed, I can't,
 Of law I'm wholly ignorant;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And you know where I'm hurrying to."
"I'm fairly puzzled what to do.
Give you up, or my cause?" "Oh, me,
Me, by all means!" "I won't!" quoth he;
And stalks on, holding by me tight.
As with your conqueror to fight
Is hard, I follow. "How,"—anon
He rambles off,—“how get you on,
You and Mæcenas? To so few
He keeps himself. So clever, too!
No man more dexterous to seize
And use his opportunities.
Just introduce me, and you'll see,
We'd pull together famously;
And, hang me then, if, with my backing,
You don't send all your rivals packing!"
"Things in that quarter, sir, proceed
In very different style, indeed.
No house more free from all that's base,
In none cabals more out of place.
It hurts me not if others be
More rich, or better read than me.
Each has his place!" "Amazing tact!
Scarce credible!" "But 'tis the fact."
"You quicken my desire to get
An introduction to his set."
"With merit such as yours, you need
But wish it, and you must succeed.
He's to be won, and that is why
Of strangers he's so very shy."
"I'll spare no pains, no arts, no shifts!
His servants I'll corrupt with gifts.
To-day though driven from his gate,
What matter? I will lie in wait,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To catch some lucky chance; I'll meet
Or overtake him in the street;
I'll haunt him like his shadow. Nought
In life without much toil is bought."

Just at this moment who but my
Dear friend Aristius should come by?
My rattlebrain right well he knew.
We stop. "Whence, friends, and whither to?"
He asks and answers. Whilst we ran
The usual courtesies, I began
To pluck him by the sleeve, to pinch
His arms, that feel but will not flinch,
By nods and winks most plain to see
Imploring him to rescue me.
He, wickedly obtuse the while,
Meets all my signals with a smile.
I, choked with rage, said, "Was there not
Some business, I've forgotten what,
You mentioned, that you wished with me
To talk about, and privately?"
"Oh, I remember! Never mind!
Some more convenient time I'll find.
The Thirtieth Sabbath this! Would you
Affront the circumcised Jew?"
"Religious scruples I have none."
"Ah, but I have. I am but one
Of the *canaille*—a feeble brother.
Your pardon. Some fine day or other
I'll tell you what it was." Oh, day
Of woeful doom to me! Away
The rascal bolted like an arrow,
And left me underneath the harrow;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

When, by the rarest luck, we ran
At the next turn against the man
Who had the lawsuit with my bore.
“Ha, knave!” he cried, with loud uproar,
“Where are you off to? Will you here
Stand witness?” I present my ear.
To court he hustles him along;
High words are bandied, high and strong,
A mob collects, the fray to see:
So did Apollo rescue me.

Horace

27

EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT¹

*P*OPE. Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigued, I said,
Tie up the knocker, say I'm sick, I'm dead.
The Dog-star rages! nay, 'tis past a doubt,
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out:
Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,
They rave, recite, and madden round the land.

What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide;
By land, by water, they renew the charge,
They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.
No place is sacred, not the church is free;
E'en Sunday shines no Sabbath day to me:
Then from the Mint walks forth the man of rhyme,
Happy to catch me just at dinner time.

Is there a parson, much bemused in beer,
A maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer,
A clerk, foredoomed his father's soul to cross,
Who pens a stanza, when he should engross?

¹ Approximately the first half of the poem.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Is there, who, locked from ink and paper, scrawls
 With desperate charcoal round his darkened walls?
 All fly to Twit'nam, and in humble strain
 Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.
 Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the laws,
 Imputes to me and my damned works the cause:
 Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,
 And curses wit, and poetry, and Pope.

Friend to my life! (which did not you prolong,
 The world had wanted many an idle song)
 What drop or nostrum can this plague remove?
 Or which must end me, a fool's wrath or love?
 A dire dilemma! either way I'm sped:
 If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.
 Seized and tied down to judge, how wretched I!
 Who can't be silent, and who will not lie.
 To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,
 And to be grave, exceeds all power of face.
 I sit with sad civility, I read
 With honest anguish, and an aching head;
 And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,
 This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."

"Nine years!" cries he, who high in Drury Lane,
 Lulled by soft zephyrs through the broken pane,
 Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before term ends,
 Obligated by hunger, and request of friends:

"The piece, you think, is incorrect? why, take it,
 I'm all submission, what you'd have it, make it."

Three things another's modest wishes bound,
 My friendship, and a prologue, and ten pound.

Pitholeon sends to me: "You know his Grace,
 I want a patron; ask him for a place."

"Pitholeon libeled me"—"But here's a letter
 Informs you, sir, 'twas when he knew no better.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Dare you refuse him? Curll invites to dine,
He'll write a journal, or he'll turn divine."

Bless me! a packet.—"'Tis a stranger sues,
A virgin tragedy, an orphan Muse."
If I dislike it, "Furies, death and rage!"
If I approve, "Commend it to the stage."
There (thank my stars) my whole commission ends,
The players and I are, luckily, no friends.
Fired that the house reject him, "'Sdeath I'll print it,
And shame the fools——Your interest, sir, with Lintot!"
"Lintot, dull rogue! will think your price too much:"
"Not, sir, if you revise it, and retouch."
All my demurs but double his attacks;
At last he whispers, "Do; and we go snacks."
Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door;
"Sir, let me see your works and you no more."

'Tis sung, when Midas' ears began to spring,
(Midas, a sacred person and a king)
His very minister who spied them first,
(Some say his queen) was forced to speak, or burst.
And is not mine, my friend, a sorer case,
When every coxcomb perks them in my face?
Arbutnot. Good friend, forbear! you deal in dangerous
things.

I'd never name queens, ministers, or kings;
Keep close to ears, and those let asses prick;
'Tis nothing—*P.* Nothing? if they bite and kick?
Out with it, Dunciad! let the secret pass,
That secret to each fool, that he's an ass:
The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie?),
The Queen of Midas slept, and so may I.

You think this cruel? take it for a rule,
No creature smarts so little as a fool.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Let peals of laughter, Codrus! round thee break,
 Thou unconcerned canst hear the mighty crack:
 Pit, box, and gallery in convulsions hurled,
 Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world.
 Who shames a scribbler? break one cobweb through,
 He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew:
 Destroy his fib or sophistry, in vain,
 The creature's at his dirty work again,
 Throned in the center of his thin designs,
 Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines!
 Whom have I hurt? has poet yet, or peer,
 Lost the arched eyebrow, or Parnassian sneer? ¹
 Does not one table Bavius still admit?
 Still to one bishop Philips seem a wit?
 Still Sappho——*A.* Hold! for God's sake—you'll offend,
 No names!—be calm!—learn prudence of a friend:
 I too could write, and I am twice as tall;
 But foes like these——*P.* One flatterer's worse than all.
 Of all mad creatures, if the learned are right,
 It is the slaver kills, and not the bite.
 A fool quite angry is quite innocent:
 Alas! 'tis ten times worse when they repent.

One dedicates in high heroic prose,
 And ridicules beyond a hundred foes;
 One from all Grub Street will my fame defend,
 And, more abusive, calls himself my friend.
 This prints my letters, that expects a bribe,
 And others roar aloud, "Subscribe, subscribe!"

There are, who to my person pay their court:
 I cough like Horace, and, though lean, am short,
 Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,
 Such Ovid's nose, and "Sir! you have an eye"—

¹ The two following lines are omitted.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Go on, obliging creatures, make me see
All that disgraced my betters, met in me.
Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,
“Just so immortal Maro held his head:”
And when I die, be sure you let me know
Great Homer died three thousand years ago.

Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
Dipped me in ink, my parents', or my own?
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.
I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobeyed.
The Muse but served to ease some friend, not wife,
To help me through this long disease, my life,
To second, Arbuthnot! thy art and care,
And teach the being you preserved, to bear.

But why then publish? Granville the polite,
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write;
Well-natured Garth inflamed with early praise;
And Congreve loved, and Swift endured my lays;
The courtly Talbot, Somers, Sheffield, read;
E'en mitred Rochester would nod the head,
And St. John's self (great Dryden's friends before)
With open arms received one poet more.
Happy my studies, when by these approved!
Happier their author, when by these beloved!
From these the world will judge of men and books,
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons, and Cookes.

Soft were my numbers; who could take offense
While pure description held the place of sense?
Like gentle Fanny's was my flowery theme,
A painted mistress, or a purling stream.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill;—
I wished the man a dinner, and sat still.
Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;
I never answered—I was not in debt.
If want provoked, or madness made them print,
I waged no war with Bedlam or the Mint.

Did some more sober critic come abroad;
If wrong, I smiled; if right, I kissed the rod.
Pains, reading, study, are their just pretense,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.
Commas and points they set exactly right,
And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite;
Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel graced these ribalds,
From slashing Bentley down to piddling Tibbalds.
Each wight, who reads not, and but scans and spells,
Each word-catcher, that lives on syllables,
E'en such small critics some regard may claim,
Preserved in Milton's or in Shakespeare's name.
Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms!
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.

Were others angry: I excused them too;
Well might they rage, I gave them but their due.
A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find;
But each man's secret standard in his mind,—
That casting-weight pride adds to emptiness,—
This, who can gratify? for who can guess?
The bard whom pilfered Pastorals renown,
Who turns a Persian tale for half a crown,
Just writes to make his barrenness appear,
And strains from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He, who still wanting, though he lives on theft,
Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left;
And he, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
Means not, but blunders round about a meaning;
And he, whose fustian's so sublimely bad,
It is not poetry, but prose run mad:
All these, my modest satire bade translate,
And owned that nine such poets made a Tate.
How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe!
And swear, not Addison himself was safe.

Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
True genius kindles, and fair fame inspires;
Blessed with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
A timorous foe, and a suspicious friend;
Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,
And so obliging, that he ne'er obliged;
Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While wits and Templars every sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise—
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he! ¹

Alexander Pope

¹ "Atticus" is Pope's fictitious name for Addison.

THE SYRACUSAN GOSSIPS
OR
THE FEAST OF ADONIS¹

Gorgo, Praxinoe: *the Gossips*
Eunoe: *servant of Praxinoe*
Phrygia: *her housemaid* Little Boy: *her son*
Old Woman Two men

Scene: ALEXANDRIA IN EGYPT

GORGEO. [*At her friend's door.*] Praxinoe within?
Eunoe. Why, Gorgo, dear,
How late you are! Yes, she's within.
Prax. [*Appearing.*] What, no!
And so you're come at last! A seat here, Eunoe;
And set a cushion.
Eunoe. There is one.
Prax. Sit down.
Gorgo. Oh, what a thing's a spirit! Do you know,
I've scarcely got alive to you, Praxinoe?

¹ Idyll XV, translated by Leigh Hunt. Following is a part of the translator's introductory commentary: "It is a poem on the *Rites of Adonis*; or rather, on a couple of gossips, making holiday to enjoy the festival that formed a part of the rites. Adonis, the favorite of Venus, slain by the boar, and permitted by Jupiter to return to life every half-year and enjoy her company, was annually commemorated by the heathen world for the space of two days, the first of which was passed in mourning for his death, and the second, in feasting and merriment for his coming to life. Arsinoe, the consort of the poet's patron, Ptolemy Philadelphus, celebrated these rites in the Egyptian capital, Alexandria; and Theocritus, in order to praise his royal friends, and at the same time give a picture of his countrywomen, introduces two women who were born in Syracuse and settled in Alexandria, making holiday on the occasion, and going to see the show. The show was that of the second day, and principally consisted of an image of Adonis laid in a bower of leaves and tapestry, and served with all the luxuries of the season, particularly flowers in pots. He was attended by flying Cupids, and eulogized by singers in hymns, much in the manner of saints and angels in a modern Catholic festival; and on the following morning, the image, with its flowers, was taken in procession to the seaside, and committed to the waters on its way to the other world. The whole proceeding is intimated in the poem, by means of verses put into the mouth of the public singer, the Grisi or Malibran of the day; but the chief portion of it is assigned to the humors of the two gossips, who are precisely such as would be drawn at this moment on a similar occasion in any crowded city."

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

There's such a crowd—such heaps of carriages,
And horses, and fine soldiers, all full dressed;
And then you live such an immense way off!

Prax. Why, 'twas *his* shabby doing. He would take
This hole that he calls house, at the world's end.
'Twas all to spite me, and to part us two.

Gorgo. [*Speaking lower.*] Don't talk so of your husband,
there's a dear,
Before the little one. See how he looks at you.

Prax. [*To the little boy.*] There, don't look grave, child;
cheer up, Zopy, sweet;
It isn't your papa we're talking of.

Gorgo. [*Aside.*] He thinks it is, though.

Prax. Oh no—nice papa!
[*To Gorgo.*] Well, this strange body once (let us say *once*,
And then he won't know who we're telling of),
Going to buy some washes and saltpeter,
Comes bringing salt! the great big simpleton!

Gorgo. And there's my precious ninny, Dioclede:
He gave for five old ragged fleeces, yesterday,
Ten drachmas!—for mere dirt! trash upon trash!
But come; put on your things; button away,
Or we shall miss the show. It's the king's own;
And I am told the queen has made of it
A wonderful fine thing.

Prax. Ay, luck has luck.
Well, tell us all about it; for we hear
Nothing in this vile place.

Gorgo. We haven't time.
Workers can't throw away their holidays.

Prax. Some water, Eunoe; and then, my fine one,
To take your rest again. Puss loves good lying.
Come; move, girl, move; some water—water first.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Look how she brings it! Now, then;—hold, hold, careless;
Not quite so fast; you're wetting all my gown.

There; that'll do. Now, please the gods, I'm washed.

The key of the great chest—where's that? Go fetch it.

[*Exit Eunoe.*]

Gorgo. Praxinoe, that gown with the full skirts
Becomes you mightily. What did it cost you?

Prax. Oh, don't remind me of it. More than one
Or two good minas, besides time and trouble.

Gorgo. All of which you had forgotten.

Prax. Ah, ha! True;
That's good. You're quite right.

Re-enter Eunoe.

Come; my cloak, my cloak;
And parasol. There—help it on now, properly.

[*To the little boy.*] Child, child, you cannot go. The horse
will bite it;

The Horrid Woman's coming. Well, well, simpleton,
Cry, if you will; but you must not get lamed.

Come, Gorgo.—Phrygia, take the child, and play with him;
And call the dog indoors, and lock the gate. [*They go out.*
Powers, what a crowd! how shall we get along?

Why, they're like ants! countless! innumerable!

Well, Ptolemy, you've done fine things, that's certain,
Since the gods took your father. No one nowadays

Does harm to trav'lers as they used to do,
After the Egyptian fashion, lying in wait,—

Masters of nothing but detestable tricks;
And all alike,—a set of cheats and brawlers.

Gorgo, sweet friend, what will become of us?

Here are the king's horse-guards! Pray, my good man,
Don't tread upon us so. See the bay horse!

Look how it rears! It's like a great mad dog.

How you stand, Eunoe! It will throw him certainly.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

How lucky that I left the child at home!

Gorgo. Courage, Praxinoe; they have passed us now;
They've gone into the courtyard.

Prax. Good! I breathe again.
I never could abide in all my life
A horse and a cold snake.

Gorgo. [*Addressing an old woman.*] From court, mother?

Old Woman. Yes, child.

Gorgo. Pray, is it easy to get in?

Old Woman. The Greeks got into Troy. Everything's
done

By trying. [*Exit Old Woman.*]

Gorgo. Bless us! How she bustles off!
Why, the old woman's quite oracular.
But women must know everything; ev'n what Juno
Wore on her wedding-day. See now, Praxinoe,
How the gate's crowded.

Prax. Frightfully, indeed.
Give me your hand, dear Gorgo; and do you
Hold fast of Eutyche's, Eunoe.
Don't let her go; don't stir an inch; and so
We'll all squeeze in together. Stick close now.
Oh me! oh me! my veil's torn right in two!
Do take care, my good man, and mind my cloak.

Man. 'Twas not my fault; but I'll take care.

Prax. What heaps!
They drive like pigs!

Man. Courage, old girl! all's safe.

Prax. Blessings upon you, sir, now and forever,
For taking care of us—a good, kind soul.
How Eunoe squeezes us! Do, child, make way
For your own self. There; now, we've all got in,
As the man said, when he was put in prison.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Gorgo. Praxinoc, do look there! What lovely tapestry!
How fine and showy! One would think the gods did it.

Prax. Holy Minerva! how those artists work!
How they do paint their pictures to the life!
The figures stand so like, and move so like!
They're quite alive! not worked!—Well, certainly,
Man's a wise creature. See now—only look—
See—lying on the silver couch, all budding,
With the young down about his face! Adonis!
Charming Adonis—charming ev'n in Acheron!

Second Man. Do hold your tongues there; chatter, chatter,
chatter.

The turtles stun one with their yawning gabble.

Gorgo. Hey-day! Whence comes the man? What is't to
you,
If we do chatter? Speak where you've a right.
You're not the master here. And as for that,
Our people are from Corinth, like Bellerophon.
Our tongue's Peloponnesiac; and we hope
It's lawful for the Dorians to speak Doric!

Prax. We've but one master, by the Honey-sweet! ¹
And don't fear you, nor all your empty blows.

Gorgo. Hush, hush, Praxinoc!—there's the Grecian girl,
A most amazing creature, going to sing
About Adonis; she that sings so well
The song of Sperchis: she'll sing something fine,
I warrant.—See how sweetly she prepares!

The Song

O Lady, who dost take delight
In Golgos and the Erycian height,
And in the Idalian dell,
Venus, ever amiable;

¹ An epithet applied by the Sicilians to Proserpine. [Translator's note.]

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Lo, the long-expected Hours,
Slowest of the blessed powers,
Yet who bring us something ever,
Ceasing their soft dancing never,
Bring thee back thy beauteous one
From perennial Acheron.

Thou, they say, from earth hast given
Berenice place in heaven,
Dropping to her woman's heart
Ambrosia; and for this kind part,
Berenice's daughter—she
That's Helen-like—Arsinoë,
O thou many-named and shrined,
Is to thy Adonis kind.

He has all the fruits that now
Hang upon the timely bough:
He has green young garden plots,
Basketed in silver pots;
Syrian scents in alabaster,
And whate'er a curious taster
Could desire, that women make
With oil or honey, of meal cake;
And all shapes of beast or bird,
In the woods by huntsman stirred;
And a bower to shade his state
Heaped with dill, an amber weight;
And about him Cupids flying,
Like young nightingales, that—trying
Their new wings—go half afraid,
Here and there, within the shade.
See the gold! The ebony see!
And the eagles in ivory,
Bearing the young Trojan up

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To be filler of Jove's cup;
 And the tapestry's purple heap,
 Softer than the feel of sleep;
 Artists, contradict who can,
 Samian or Milesian.
 But another couch there is
 For Adonis, close to his;
 Venus has it, and with joy
 Clasps again her blooming boy
 With a kiss that feels no fret,
 For his lips are downy yet.
 Happy with her love be she;
 But to-morrow morn will we,
 With our locks and garments flowing
 And our bosoms gently showing,
 Come and take him, in a throng,
 To the sea-shore, with this song:—
 Go, beloved Adonis, go
 Year by year thus to and fro;
 Only privileged demigod;
 There was no such open road
 For Atrides; nor the great
 Ajax, chief infuriate;
 Nor for Hector, noblest once
 Of his mother's twenty sons;
 Nor Patroclus, nor the boy
 That returned from taken Troy;
 Nor those older buried bones,
 Lapiths and Deucalions;
 Nor Pelopians, and their boldest;
 Nor Pelasgians, Greece's oldest.
 Bless us then, Adonis dear,
 And bring us joy another year;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
 Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
 The bough of cherries some officious fool
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning

30

ANDREA DEL SARTO

CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER"

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common grayness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do what many dream of all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray,
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“God and the glory! never care for gain,
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!”
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul’s self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will’s somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
’Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael’s daily wear,
In that humane great monarch’s golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth’s good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
 To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face.
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died;
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo, and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

Robert Browning

31 THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
“Do I live, am I dead?” Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side, .

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
 And up into the æry dome where live
 The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
 And 'neath my tabernacle¹ take my rest,
 With those nine columns round me, two and two,
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
 As fresh poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,²
 Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
 Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
 Draw close: that conflagration of my church
 —What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
 My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
 Drop water gently till the surface sink,
 And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,³
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,⁴
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
 So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
 Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?

¹ The canopy over the tomb.

² An Italian marble.

³ Olive basket, made of rushes.

⁴ An ornamental stone, in color a rich azure blue.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine ¹
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's ² every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense smoke!

¹ A lime rock of little value.

² Tully's (Cicero's) Latin the Bishop considers standard; Ulpian's, unacceptable.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
 And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth,¹ drop
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
 About the life before I lived this life,
 And this life too, popes, cardinals, and priests,
 Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
 —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT² quoth our friend?
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
 All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
 My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
 With grapes, and add a visor and a Term,³
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
 To comfort me on my entablature
 Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
 "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—

¹ The Bishop has in mind the stone shroud of the effigy on a tomb.

² "He was illustrious"—a part of "Old Gandolf's" epitaph.

³ A bust (ending in a square block of stone) of the god Terminus, the god of boundaries.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Gritstone, acrumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

Robert Browning

32

MARPESSA¹

*Marpessa, being given by Zeus her choice between
the god Apollo and Idas, a mortal, chose Idas.*

WOUNDED with beauty in the summer night
Young Idas tossed upon his couch, and cried
“Marpessa, O Marpessa!” From the dark
The floating smell of flowers invisible,
The mystic yearning of the garden wet,
The moonless-passing night—into his brain
Wandered, until he rose and outward leaned
In the dim summer: ’twas the moment deep
When we are conscious of the secret dawn,
Amid the darkness that we feel is green.
To Idas had Marpessa been revealed,
Roaming with morning thoughts amid the dew,
All fresh from sleeping; and upon her cheek
The bloom of pure repose; like perfect fruit
Even at the moment was her beauty ripe.
The god Apollo from the heaven of heavens

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NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Her mortal sweetness through the air allured;
And on this very noon she shall decide
'Twixt Idas and the god, take to herself
A brief or an eternal lover. So
When the long day that glideth without cloud,
The summer day, was at her blue deep hour
Of lilies musical with busy bliss,
When very light trembled as with excess,
And heat was frail, and every bush and flower
Was drooping in the glory overcome;
They three together met; on the one side,
Fresh from diffusing light on all the world,
Apollo; on the other without sleep
Idas, and in the midst Marpessa stood.
Just as a flower after drenching rain,
So from the falling of felicity
Her human beauty glowed, and it was new;
The bee too near her bosom drowsed and dropped.
But as the god sprang to embrace her, they
Heard thunder, and a little afterward
The far Paternal voice, "Let her decide."
And as a flame blown backward by a gust,
Burned to and fro in fury beautiful
The murmuring god; but at the last he spoke,
And smiled as on his favorite western isle.
"Marpessa, though no trouble, nor any pain,
So is it willed, can touch me; but I live
For ever in a deep deliberate bliss,
A spirit sliding through tranquillity;
Yet when I saw thee I imagined woe,
That thou who art so fair, shouldst ever taste
Of the earth-sorrow: for thy life has been
The history of a flower in the air,
Liable but to breezes and to time,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

As rich and purposeless as is the rose:
Thy simple doom is to be beautiful.
Thee God created but to grow, not strive,
And not to suffer, merely to be sweet,
The favorite of his rains; and thou indeed
Lately upon the summer wast disclosed.
Child, wilt thou taste of grief? On thee the hours
Shall feed, and bring thy soul into the dusk:
Even now thy face is hasting to the dark!
For slowly shalt thou cool to all things great,
And wisely smile at love; and thou shalt see
Beautiful Faith surrendering to Time,
The fierce ingratitude of children loved,
Ah, sting of stings! A mourner shalt thou stand
At Passion's funeral in decent garb.
The greenly silent and cool-growing night
Shall be the time when most thou art awake,
With dreary eyes of all illusion cured,
Beside that stranger that thy husband is.
But if thou'lt live with me, then shalt thou bide
In mere felicity above the world,
In peace alive and moving, where 'to stir
Is ecstasy, and thrilling is repose.
What is the love of men that women seek it?
In its beginning pale with cruelty,
But having sipped of beauty, negligent,
And full of languor and distaste: for they,
Seeking that perfect face beyond the world,
Approach in vision earthly semblances,
And touch, and at the shadows flee away.
Then wilt thou die? Part with eternal thoughts,
Lie without any hope beneath the grass,
All thy imaginations in the dust?
And all that tint and melody and breath,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Which in their lovely unison are thou,
To be dispersed upon the whirling sands!
Thy soul blown seaward on nocturnal blast!
O brief and breathing creature, wilt thou cease,
Once having been? Thy doom doth make thee rich,
And the low grave doth make thee exquisite,
But if thou'lt live with me, then will I kiss
Warm immortality into thy lips;
And I will carry thee above the world,
To share my ecstasy of flinging beams,
And scattering without intermission joy.
And thou shalt know the first leap of the sea
Toward me; the grateful upward look of earth,
Emerging roseate from her bath of dew,—
We two in heaven dancing,—Babylon
Shall flash and murmur, and cry from under us,
And Nineveh catch fire, and at our feet
Be hurled with her inhabitants, and all
Adoring Asia kindle and hugely bloom;—
We two in heaven running,—continents
Shall lighten, ocean unto ocean flash,
And rapidly laugh till all this world is warm.
Or since thou art a woman, thou shalt have
More tender tasks; to steal upon the sea,
A long expected bliss to tossing men.
Or build upon the evening sky some wished
And glorious metropolis of cloud.
Thou shalt persuade the harvest and bring on
The deeper green; or silently attend
The fiery funeral of foliage old,
Connive with Time serene and the good hours.
Or,—for I know thy heart,—a dearer toil,—
To lure into the air a face long sick,
To gild the brow that from its dead looks up,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To shine on the unforgiven of this world;
With slow sweet surgery restore the brain,
And to dispel shadows and shadowy fear.”
When he had spoken, humbly Idas said:
“After such argument what can I plead?
Or what pale promise make? Yet since it is
In women to pity rather than to aspire,
A little I will speak. I love thee then
Not only for thy body packed with sweet
Of all this world, that cup of brimming June,
That jar of violet wine set in the air,
That palest rose sweet in the night of life;
Nor for that stirring bosom all besieged
By drowsing lovers, or thy perilous hair;
Nor for that face that might indeed provoke
Invasion of old cities; no, nor all
Thy freshness stealing on me like strange sleep.
Not for this only do I love thee, but
Because Infinity upon thee broods;
And thou art full of whispers and of shadows.
Thou meanest what the sea has striven to say
So long, and yearnèd up the cliffs to tell;
Thou art what all the winds have uttered not,
What the still night suggesteth to the heart.
Thy voice is like to music heard ere birth,
Some spirit lute touched on a spirit sea;
Thy face remembered is from other worlds,
It has been died for, though I know not when,
It has been sung of, though I know not where.
It has the strangeness of the luring West,
And of sad sea-horizons; beside thee
I am aware of other times and lands,
Of birth far back, of lives in many stars.
O beauty lone and like a candle clear

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

In this dark country of the world! Thou art
My woe, my early light, my music dying.”
As he was speaking, she with lips apart
Breathed, and with dimmer eyes leaned through the air
As one in dream, and now his human hand
Took in her own; and to Apollo spoke:
“O gradual rose of the dim universe!
Whose warmth steals through the grave unto the dead,
Soul of the early sky, the priest of bloom!
Who beautifully goest in the West,
Attracting as to an eternal home
The yearning soul. Male of the female earth!
O eager bridegroom springing in this world
As in thy bed prepared! Fain would I know
Yon heavenly wafting through the heaven wide,
And the large view of the subjected seas,
And famous cities, and the various toil
Of men: all Asia at my feet spread out
In indolent magnificence of bloom!
Africa in her matted hair obscured,
And India in meditation plunged!
Then the delight of flinging the sunbeams,
Diffusing silent bliss; and yet more sweet,—
To cherish fruit on the warm wall; to raise
Out of the tomb to glory the pale wheat,
Serene ascension by the rain prepared;
To work with the benignly falling hours,
And beautiful slow Time. But dearest this,—
To gild the face that from its dead looks up,
To shine on the rejected, and arrive
To women that remember in the night;
Or mend with sweetest surgery the mind.
And yet, forgive me if I can but speak
Most human words. Of immortality

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Thou singest: thou wouldst hold me from the ground,
And this just opening beauty from the grave.
As yet I have known no sorrow; all my days
Like perfect lilies under water stir,
And God has sheltered me from his own wind;
The darling of his breezes have I been.
Yet as to one inland, that dreameth lone,
Seafaring men with their sea-weary eyes,
Round the inn fire tell of some foreign land;
So agèd men, much tossed about in life,
Have told me of that country, Sorrow far.
How many goodly ships at anchor lie
Within her ports; even to me indeed
Hath a sea-rumor through the night been borne.
And I myself remember, and have heard,
Of men that did believe, women that loved,
That were unhappy long and now are dead,
With wounds that no eternity can close,
Life had so marked them: or of others who
Panted toward their end, and fell on death
Even as sobbing runners breast the tape.
And most I remember of all human things
My mother; often as a child I pressed
My face against her cheek, and felt her tears;
Even as she smiled on me, her eyes would fill,
Until my own grew ignorantly wet;
And I in silence wonderèd at sorrow.
When I remember this, how shall I know
That I myself may not, by sorrow taught,
Accept the perfect stillness of the ground?
Where, though I lie still, and stir not at all,
Yet shall I irresistibly be kind,
Helplessly sweet, a wandering garden bliss.
My ashes shall console and make for peace;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

This mind that injured, be an aimless balm.
Or if there be some other world, with no
Bloom, neither rippling sound, nor early smell,
Nor leaves, nor pleasant exchange of human speech;
Only a dreadful pacing to and fro
Of spirits meditating on the sun;
A land of barèd boughs and grieving wind;
Yet would I not forego the doom, the place,
Whither my poets and my heroes went
Before me; warriors that with deeds forlorn
Saddened my youth, yet made it great to live;
Lonely antagonists of Destiny,
That went down scornful before many spears,
Who, soon as we are born, are straight our friends;
And live in simple music, country songs,
And mournful ballads by the winter fire.
Since they have died, their death is ever mine;
I would not lose it. 'Then, thou speak'st of joy,
Of immortality without one sigh,
Existence without tears for evermore.
Thou wouldst preserve me from the anguish, lest
This holy face into the dark return.
Yet I being human, human sorrow miss.
The half of music, I have heard men say,
Is to have grieved; when comes the lonely wail
Over the mind; old men have told it me,
Subdued after long life by simple sounds.
The mourner is the favorite of the moon,
And the departing sun his glory owes
To the eternal thoughts of creatures brief,
Who think the thing that they shall never see.
Since we must die, how bright the starry track!
How wonderful in a bereavèd ear
The Northern wind; how strange the summer night,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The exhaling earth to those who vainly love.
Out of our sadness have we made this world
So beautiful; the sea sighs in our brain,
And in our heart that yearning of the moon.
To all this sorrow was I born, and since
Out of a human womb I came, I am
Not eager to forego it; I would scorn
To elude the heaviness and take the joy,
For pain came with the sap, pangs with the bloom:
This is the sting, the wonder. Yet should I
Linger beside thee in felicity,
Sliding with open eyes through liquid bliss
For ever; still I must grow old. Ah, I
Should ail beside thee, Apollo, and should note
With eyes that would not be, but yet are dim,
Ever so slight a change from day to day
In thee my husband; watch thee nudge thyself
To little offices that once were sweet:
Slow where thou once wert swift, remembering
To kiss those lips which once thou couldst not leave.
I should expect thee by the Western bay,
Faded, not sure of thee, with desperate smiles,
And pitiful devices of my dress
Or fashion of my hair: thou wouldst grow kind;
Most bitter to a woman that was loved.
I must ensnare thee to my arms, and touch
Thy pity, to but hold thee to my heart.
But if I live with Idas, then we two
On the low earth shall prosper hand in hand
In odors of the open field, and live
In peaceful noises of the farm, and watch
The pastoral fields burned by the setting sun.
And he shall give me passionate children, not
Some radiant god that will despise me quite,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But clambering limbs and little hearts that err.
And I shall sleep beside him in the night,
And fearful from some dream shall touch his hand
Secure; or at some festival we two
Will wander through the lighted city streets;
And in the crowd I'll take his arm and feel
Him closer for the press. So shall we live.
And though the first sweet sting of love be past,
The sweet that almost venom is; though youth,
With tender and extravagant delight,
The first and secret kiss by twilight hedge,
The insane farewell repeated o'er and o'er,
Pass off; there shall succeed a faithful peace;
Beautiful friendship tried by sun and wind,
Durable from the daily dust of life.
And though with sadder, still with kinder eyes,
We shall behold all frailties, we shall haste
To pardon, and with mellowing minds to bless.
Then though we must grow old, we shall grow old
Together, and he shall not greatly miss
My bloom faded, and waning light of eyes,
Too deeply gazed in ever to seem dim;
Nor shall we murmur at, nor much regret
The years that gently bend us to the ground,
And gradually incline our face; that we
Leisurely stooping, and with each slow step,
May curiously inspect our lasting home.
But we shall sit with luminous holy smiles,
Endeared by many griefs, by many a jest,
And custom sweet of living side by side;
And full of memories not unkindly glance
Upon each other. Last, we shall descend
Into the natural ground—not without tears—
One must go first, ah god! one must go first;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

After so long one blow for both were good;
Still like old friends, glad to have met, and leave
Behind a wholesome memory on the earth.
And thou, beautiful god, in that far time,
When in thy setting sweet thou gazest down
On this gray head, wilt thou remember then
That once I pleased thee, that I once was young?"

When she had spoken, Idas with one cry
Held her, and there was silence; while the god
In anger disappeared. Then slowly they,
He looking downward, and she gazing up,
Into the evening green wandered away.

Stephen Phillips

33

ÆNONE¹

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapor slopes athwart the glen,

¹ Paris, also called Alexander, "was the second son of Priam and Hecuba. Before his birth Hecuba dreamed that she had brought forth a firebrand, the flames of which spread over the whole city. Accordingly, as soon as the child was born, he was exposed on Mt. Ida, but was brought up by a shepherd, who gave him the name of Paris. . . . He succeeded in discovering his real origin, and was received by Priam as his son. He married Ænone, the daughter of the river god Cebren, but he soon deserted her for Helen. The tale runs that when Peleus and Thetis solemnized their nuptials, all the gods were invited to the marriage with the exception of Eris, or Strife. Enraged at her exclusion, the goddess threw a golden apple among the guests, with the inscription 'to the fairest.' Thereupon Hera [or Here], Aphrodite and Athena [or Pallas], each claimed the apple for herself. Zeus ordered Hermes to take the goddesses to Mt. Ida, and to entrust the decision of the dispute to the shepherd Paris. The goddesses accordingly appeared before him. Hera promised him the sovereignty of Asia, Athena renown in war, and Aphrodite the fairest of women for his wife. Paris decided in favor of Aphrodite, and gave her the golden apple. . . . Under the protection of Aphrodite, Paris now sailed to Greece, and was hospitably received in the palace of Menelaus at Sparta. Here he succeeded in carrying off Helen, the wife of Menelaus, who was the most beautiful woman in the world. Hence arose the Trojan war. Before her marriage with Menelaus, she had been wooed by the noblest chiefs of all parts of Greece. Her former suitors now resolved to revenge her abduction, and sailed against Troy."—By permission from Smith's *Smaller Classical Dictionary*, Everyman's Library edition, published by E. P. Dutton & Company.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the cloven ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning; but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's columned citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful C  none, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

“O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill;
The grasshopper is silent in the grass;
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops, the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking and my eyes are dim,
And I am all awearied of my life.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O earth, hear me, O hills, O caves
That house the cold-crowned snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gathered shape; for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

“O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills;
Aloft the mountain-lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain-pine.
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horned, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

“O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far off the torrent called me from the cleft;
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone; white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Dropped from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Clustered about his temples like a god's;
And his cheek brightened as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I looked
And listened, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart:

‘My own CEnone,
Beautiful-browed CEnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingraven
“For the most fair,” would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.’

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He pressed the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added, ‘This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom ’twere due;
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris, judge of gods.’

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnoon; one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piny sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies; and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

“O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and leaned
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her to whom
Coming thro' heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestioned, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, 'from many a vale
And river-sundered champaign clothed with corn,
Or labored mine undrainable of ore.
Honor,' she said, 'and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-thronged beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers.'

“O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
'Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbor crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the scepter-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, heaven's queen, Paris, to thee king-born,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attained
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
Flattered his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply:
'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncalled for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: 'I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,

If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbiased by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigor, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a god's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinewed with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.'

“Here she ceased,

And Paris pondered, and I cried, ‘O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!’ but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

“O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whispered in his ear, ‘I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.’
She spoke and laughed; I shut my sight for fear;
But when I looked, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

“Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouched fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips pressed
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois!

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Fostered the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther’s roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Cœnone see the morning mist
Sweep thro’ them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moonlit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruined folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of gods and men.

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Even on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Sealed it with kisses? watered it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live;
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids; let me die.

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born. Her child!—a shudder comes

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.”

Alfred Tennyson

34 IPHIGENEIA AND AGAMEMNON¹

IPHIGENEIA, when she heard her doom
At Aulis, and when all beside the king
Had gone away, took his right hand, and said,
“O father! I am young and very happy.
I do not think the pious Calchas heard
Distinctly what the goddess spake. Old age
Obscures the senses. If my nurse, who knew
My voice so well, sometimes misunderstood

¹ The fleet that was to sail against Troy (see the introductory footnote above, p. 239) assembled at Aulis on the Boeotian coast. Here it was becalmed by the goddess Artemis, who, being wroth with Agamemnon, thus visited her anger on the Grecian chiefs. At length, divining her will, the soothsayer Calchas counseled Agamemnon to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia upon her altar.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

While I was resting on her knee both arms
And hitting it to make her mind my words,
And looking in her face, and she in mine,
Might he not also hear one word amiss,
Spoken from so far off, even from Olympus?"

The father placed his cheek upon her head,
And tears dropped down it, but the king of men
Replied not. Then the maiden spake once more.
"O father! sayst thou nothing? Hear'st thou not
Me, whom thou ever hast, until this hour,
Listened to fondly, and awakened me
To hear my voice amid the voice of birds,
When it was inarticulate as theirs,
And the down deadened it within the nest?"

He moved her gently from him, silent still,
And this, and this alone, brought tears from her,
Although she saw fate nearer: then with sighs,
"I thought to have laid down my hair before
Benignant Artemis, and not have dimmed
Her polished altar with my virgin blood;
I thought to have selected the white flowers
To please the Nymphs, and to have asked of each
By name, and with no sorrowful regret,
Whether, since both my parents willed the change,
I might at Hymen's feet bend my clipped brow;
And (after those who mind us girls the most)
Adore our own Athena, that she would
Regard me mildly with her azure eyes,
But father! to see you no more, and see
Your love, O father! go ere I am gone. . . ."

Gently he moved her off, and drew her back,
Bending his lofty head far over hers,
And the dark depths of nature heaved and burst.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He turned away; not far, but silent still.
She now first shuddered; for in him, so nigh,
So long a silence seemed the approach of death,
And like it. Once again she raised her voice.
“O father! if the ships are now detained,
And all your vows move not the gods above,
When the knife strikes me there will be one prayer
The less to them: and purer can there be
Any, or more fervent than the daughter’s prayer
For her dear father’s safety and success?”
A groan that shook him shook not his resolve.
An aged man now entered, and without
One word, stepped slowly on, and took the wrist
Of the pale maiden. She looked up and saw
The fillet of the priest and calm cold eyes.
Then turned she where her parent stood, and cried,
“O father! grieve no more: the ships can sail.”

Walter Savage Landor

35 THE PARTING OF HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE¹

THE Trojan War is in its tenth year. A fierce battle, with fortune favoring the Greeks, is being waged on the plains before Troy.

Hector, the son of King Priam and Hecuba, has come into the city to bid the women sacrifice to Pallas Minerva, and now, before returning to the fight, he seeks his wife and child—Andromache and Astyanax. He has come to his house, and has just learned from a woman servant that Andromache—

¹ From the sixth book of the *Iliad*. The translation is that of William Cullen Bryant, and is reprinted by permission of, and by special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

*“ . . . is hurrying toward the walls,
Like one distracted, with her son and nurse.”*

So spake the matron. Hector left in haste
The mansion, and retraced his way between
The rows of stately dwellings, traversing
The mighty city. When at length he reached
The Scæan gates, that issue on the field,
His spouse, the nobly-dowered Andromache,
Came forth to meet him,—daughter of the prince
Eëtion, who, among the woody slopes
Of Placos, in the Hypoplacian town
Of Thebè, ruled Cilicia and her sons,
And gave his child to Hector great in arms.
She came attended by a maid, who bore
A tender child—a babe too young to speak—
Upon her bosom,—Hector’s only son,
Beautiful as a star, whom Hector called
Scamandrius, but all else Astyanax,—
The city’s lord,—since Hector stood the sole
Defense of Troy. The father on his child
Looked with a silent smile. Andromache
Pressed to his side meanwhile, and, all in tears,
Clung to his hand, and, thus beginning, said:—

“Too brave! thy valor yet will cause thy death.
Thou hast no pity on thy tender child,
Nor me, unhappy one, who soon must be
Thy widow. All the Greeks will rush on thee
To take thy life. A happier lot were mine,
If I must lose thee, to go down to earth,
For I shall have no hope when thou art gone,—
Nothing but sorrow. Father have I none,
And no dear mother. Great Achilles slew

My father when he sacked the populous town
 Of the Cilicians,—Thebè with high gates.
 'Twas there he smote Eëtion, yet forbore
 To make his arms a spoil; he dared not that,
 But burned the dead with his bright armor on,
 And raised a mound above him. Mountain-nymphs,
 Daughters of ægis-bearing Jupiter,
 Came to the spot and planted it with elms.
 Seven brothers had I in my father's house,
 And all went down to Hades in one day.
 Achilles the swift-footed slew them all
 Among their slow-paced bullocks and white sheep.
 My mother, princess on the woody slopes
 Of Placos, with his spoils he bore away,
 And only for large ransom gave her back.
 But her Diana, archer-queen, struck down
 Within her father's palace. Hector, thou
 Art father and dear mother now to me,
 And brother and my youthful spouse besides.
 In pity keep within the fortress here,
 Nor make thy child an orphan nor thy wife
 A widow. Post thine army near the place
 Of the wild fig-tree, where the city walls
 Are low and may be scaled. Thrice in the war
 The boldest of the foe have tried the spot,—
 The Ajaces and the famed Idomeneus,
 The two chiefs born to Atreus, and the brave
 Tydides, whether counseled by some seer
 Or prompted to the attempt by their own minds."

Then answered Hector, great in war: "All this
 I bear in mind, dear wife; but I should stand
 Ashamed before the men and long-robed dames
 Of Troy, were I to keep aloof and shun

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

'The conflict, coward-like. Not thus my heart
Prompts me, for greatly have I learned to dare
And strike among the foremost sons of Troy,
Upholding my great father's fame and mine;
Yet well in my undoubting mind I know
The day shall come in which our sacred Troy,
And Priam, and the people over whom
Spear-bearing Priam rules, shall perish all.
But not the sorrows of the Trojan race,
Nor those of Hecuba herself, nor those
Of royal Priam, nor the woes that wait
My brothers many and brave,—who all at last,
Slain by the pitiless foe, shall lie in dust,—
Grieve me so much as thine, when some mailed Greek
Shall lead thee weeping hence, and take from thee
Thy day of freedom. Thou in Argos then
Shalt, at another's bidding, ply the loom,
And from the fountain of Messeis draw
Water, or from the Hypereian spring,
Constrained unwilling by thy cruel lot.
And then shall some one say who sees thee weep,
'This was the wife of Hector, most renowned
Of the horse-taming Trojans, when they fought
Around their city.' So shall some one say,
And thou shalt grieve the more, lamenting him
Who haply might have kept afar the day
Of thy captivity. O, let the earth
Be heaped above my head in death before
I hear thy cries as thou art borne away!'"

So speaking, mighty Hector stretched his arms
To take the boy; the boy shrank crying back
To his fair nurse's bosom, scared to see
His father helmeted in glittering brass,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And eyeing with affright the horse-hair plume
That grimly nodded from the lofty crest.
At this both parents in their fondness laughed;
And hastily the mighty Hector took
The helmet from his brow and laid it down
Gleaming upon the ground, and, having kissed
His darling son and tossed him up in play,
Prayed thus to Jove and all the gods of heaven:—

“O Jupiter and all ye deities,
Vouchsafe that this my son may yet become
Among the Trojans eminent like me,
And nobly rule in Ilium. May they say,
‘This man is greater than his father was!’
When they behold him from the battle-field
Bring back the bloody spoil of the slain foe,—
That so his mother may be glad at heart.”

So speaking, to the arms of his dear spouse
He gave the boy; she on her fragrant breast
Received him, weeping as she smiled. The chief
Beheld, and, moved with tender pity, smoothed
Her forehead gently with his hand and said:—

“Sorrow not thus, belovèd one, for me.
No living man can send me to the shades
Before my time; no man of woman born,
Coward or brave, can shun his destiny.
But go thou home, and tend thy labors there,—
The web, the distaff,—and command thy maids
To speed the work. The cares of war pertain
To all men born in Troy, and most to me.”

Thus speaking, mighty Hector took again
His helmet, shadowed with the horse-hair plume,
While homeward his beloved consort went,
Oft looking back, and shedding many tears.

Homer

36 NIGHT ON THE PLAINS OF TROY¹

HECTOR has just urged the Trojan host to bivouac for the night on the plains before the Grecian camp, instead of returning as usual into the city.

So Hector spake; the Trojans roared applause;
 Then loosed their sweating horses from the yoke,
 And each beside his chariot bound his own;
 And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep
 In haste they drove, and honey-hearted wine
 And bread from out the houses brought, and heaped
 Their firewood, and the winds from off the plain
 Rolled the rich vapor far into the heaven.
 And these all night upon the bridge of war
 Sat glorying; many a fire before them blazed:
 As when in heaven the stars about the moon
 Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
 And every height comes out, and jutting peak
 And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
 Break open to their highest, and all the stars
 Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart:
 So many a fire between the ships and stream
 Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
 A thousand on the plain; and close by each
 Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
 And eating hoary grain and pulse the steeds,
 Fixt by their cars, waited the golden dawn.

Homer

¹ From the eighth book of the *Iliad*. Translated by Alfred Tennyson.

37 THE RANSOMING OF HECTOR'S BODY¹

HECTOR has killed the Greek warrior Patroclus, and in his turn he too has fallen, his slayer being Patroclus's friend, renowned Achilles. King Priam, his father, now comes with gifts to ransom his dead body. Led by the god Mercury, the King and his companion, the sage Idæus, have entered the Grecian camp unseen and have come near to the tent of Achilles.

Achilles, sometimes called Pelides, after Peleus, his father, has been told by Thetis, his goddess mother, of Jupiter's desire that he should deal kindly with Priam and accept the proffered ransom.

In the opening words of the passage the god Mercury (here sometimes called Hermes), hitherto disguised, reveals himself to Priam.

“O aged monarch, I am Mercury,
An ever-living god; my father, Jove,
Bade me attend thy journey. I shall now
Return, nor must Achilles look on me;
It is not meet that an immortal god
Should openly befriend a mortal man.
Enter, approach Pelides, clasp his knees;
Entreat him by his father, and his son,
And fair-haired mother; so shall he be moved.”

Thus having spoken, Hermes took his way
Back to the Olympian summit. Priam then
Sprang from the chariot to the ground. He left
Idæus there to guard the steeds and mules,
And, hastening to the tent where, dear to Jove,
Achilles lodged, he found the chief within,
While his companions sat apart, save two,—

¹ From the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad*. The translation is that of William Cullen Bryant, and is reprinted by permission of, and by special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Automedon the brave, and Alcimus,
Who claimed descent from Mars. These stood near by,
And ministered to Peleus' son, who then
Was closing a repast, and had just left
The food and wine, and still the table stood.
Unmarked the royal Priam entered in,
And, coming to Achilles, clasped his knees,
And kissed those fearful slaughter-dealing hands,
By which so many of his sons had died.
And as, when some blood-guilty man, whose hand
In his own land has slain a fellow-man,
Flees to another country, and the abode
Of some great chieftain, all men look on him
Astonished,—so, when godlike Priam first
Was seen, Achilles was amazed, and all
Looked on each other, wondering at the sight.
And thus King Priam supplicating spake:—

“Think of thy father, an old man like me,
Godlike Achilles! On the dreary verge
Of closing life he stands, and even now
Haply is fiercely pressed by those who dwell
Around him, and has none to shield his age
From war and its disasters. Yet his heart
Rejoices when he hears thou yet dost live,
And every day he hopes that his dear son
Will come again from Troy. My lot is hard,
For I was father of the bravest sons
In all wide Troy, and none are left me now.
Fifty were with me when the men of Greece
Arrived upon our coast; nineteen of these
Owned the same mother, and the rest were born
Within my palaces. Remorseless Mars
Already had laid lifeless most of these,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And Hector, whom I cherished most, whose arm
 Defended both our city and ourselves,
 Him didst thou lately slay while combating
 For his dear country. For his sake I come
 To the Greek fleet, and to redeem his corse
 I bring uncounted ransom. O, revere
 The gods, Achilles, and be merciful,
 Calling to mind thy father! happier he
 Than I; for I have borne what no man else
 That dwells on earth could bear,—have laid my lip
 Upon the hand of him who slew my son.”
 He spake: Achilles sorrowfully thought
 Of his own father. By the hand he took
 The suppliant, and with gentle force removed
 The old man from him. Both in memory
 Of those they loved were weeping. The old king,
 With many tears, and rolling in the dust
 Before Achilles, mourned his gallant son.
 Achilles sorrowed for his father’s sake,
 And then bewailed Patroclus, and the sound
 Of lamentation filled the tent. At last
 Achilles, when he felt his heart relieved
 By tears, and that strong grief had spent its force,
 Sprang from his seat; then lifting by the hand
 The aged man, and pitying his white head
 And his white chin, he spake these wingèd words:—
 “Great have thy sufferings been, unhappy king!
 How couldst thou venture to approach alone
 The Grecian fleet, and show thyself to him
 Who slew so many of thy valiant sons?
 An iron heart is thine. But seat thyself,
 And let us, though afflicted grievously,
 Allow our woes to sleep awhile, for grief
 Indulged can bring no good. The gods ordain

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

The lot of man to suffer, while themselves
Are free from care. Beside Jove's threshold stand
Two casks of gifts for man. One cask contains
The evil, one the good, and he to whom
The Thunderer gives them mingled sometimes falls
Into misfortune, and is sometimes crowned
With blessings. But the man to whom he gives
The evil only stands a mark exposed
To wrong, and, chased by grim calamity,
Wanders the teeming earth, alike unloved
By gods and men. So did the gods bestow
Munificent gifts on Peleus from his birth,
For eminent was he among mankind
For wealth and plenty; o'er the Myrmidons
He ruled, and, though a mortal, he was given
A goddess for a wife. Yet did the gods
Add evil to the good, for not to him
Was born a family of kingly sons
Within his house, successors to his reign.
One short-lived son is his, nor am I there
To cherish him in his old age; but here
Do I remain, far from my native land,
In Troy, and causing grief to thee and thine.
Of thee too, aged king, they speak, as one
Whose wealth was large in former days, when all
That Lesbos, seat of Macar, owns was thine,
And all in Phrygia and the shores that bound
The Hellespont; men said thou didst excel
All others in thy riches and thy sons.
But since the gods have brought this strife on thee
War and perpetual slaughter of brave men
Are round thy city. Yet be firm of heart,
Nor grieve forever. Sorrow for thy son
Will profit nought; it cannot bring the dead

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To life again, and while thou dost afflict
Thyself for him fresh woes may fall on thee."

And thus the godlike Priam, aged king,
Made answer: "Bid me not be seated here,
Nursling of Jove, while Hector lies among
Thy tents unburi'd. Let me ransom him
At once, that I may look on him once more
With my own eyes. Receive the many gifts
We bring thee, and mayst thou possess them long,
And reach thy native shore, since by thy grace
I live and yet behold the light of day."

Achilles heard, and, frowning, thus rejoined:
"Anger me not, old man; 'twas in my thought
To let thee ransom Hector. To my tent
The mother came who bore me, sent from Jove,
The daughter of the Ancient of the Seas,
And I perceive, nor can it be concealed,
O Priam, that some god hath guided thee
To our swift galleys; for no mortal man,
Though in his prime of youthful strength, would dare
To come into the camp; he could not pass
The guard, nor move the beams that bar our gates.
So then remind me of my griefs no more,
Lest, suppliant as thou art, I leave thee not
Unharm'd, and thus transgress the laws of Jove."

He spake: the aged man in fear obeyed.
And then Pelides like a lion leaped
Forth from the door, yet not alone he went;
For of his comrades two—Automedon,
The hero, and his comrade Alcimus,
He whom Achilles held in most esteem
After the slain Patroclus—followed him.
The mules and horses they unyoked, and led
The aged monarch's clear-voiced herald in,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And bade him sit. Then from the polished car
They took the costly ransom of the corse
Of Hector, save two cloaks, which back they laid
With a fair tunic, that their chief might give
The body shrouded to be borne to Troy.
And then he called the maidens, bidding them
Wash and anoint the dead, yet far apart
From Priam, lest, with looking on his son,
The grief within his heart might rise uncurbed
To anger, and Achilles in his rage
Might slay him and transgress the laws of Jove.
And when the handmaids finished, having washed
The body and anointed it with oil,
And wrapped a sumptuous cloak and tunic round
The limbs, Achilles lifted it himself
And placed it on a bier. His comrades gave
Their aid, and raised it to the polished car.
When all was done, Achilles groaned, and called
By name the friend he dearly loved; and said:—

“O my Patroclus, be not wroth with me
Shouldst thou in Hades hear that I restore
Hector to his dear father, since I take
A ransom not unworthy; but of this
I yield to thee the portion justly thine.”

So spake the godlike warrior, and withdrew
Into his tent, and took the princely seat
From which he had arisen, opposite
To that of Priam, whom he thus bespake:—

“Behold thy son is ransomed, aged man,
As thou hast asked, and lies upon his bier.
Thou shalt behold him with the early dawn,
And bear him hence. Now let us break our fast,
For even Niobe, the golden-haired,
Refrained not from her food, though children twelve

Perished within her palace,—six young sons
 And six fair daughters. Phœbus slew the sons
 With arrows from his silver bow, incensed
 At Niobe, while Dian, archer-queen,
 Struck down the daughters; for the mother dared
 To make herself the peer of rosy-cheeked
 Latona, who, she boastfully proclaimed,
 Had borne two children only, while herself
 Had brought forth many. Yet, though only two,
 The children of Latona took the lives
 Of all her own. Nine days the corpses lay
 In blood, and there was none to bury them,
 For Jove had changed the dwellers of the place
 To stone; but on the tenth the gods of heaven
 Gave burial to the dead. Yet Niobe,
 Though spent with weeping long, did not refrain
 From food. And now forever mid the rocks
 And desert hills of Sipylus, where lie,
 Fame says, the couches of the goddess-nymphs,
 Who lead the dance where Acheloüs flows,
 Although she be transformed to stone, she broods
 Over the woes inflicted by the gods.
 But now, O noble Ancient, let us sit
 At our repast, and thou mayst afterward
 Mourn thy beloved son, while bearing him
 Homeward, to be bewailed with many tears.”

Achilles, the swift-footed, spake, and left
 His seat, and, slaying a white sheep, he bade
 His comrades flay and dress it. Then they carved
 The flesh in portions which they fixed on spits,
 And roasted carefully, and drew them back.
 And then Automedon distributed
 The bread in shapely canisters around
 The table, while Achilles served the flesh,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And all put forth their hands and shared the feast.
But when their thirst and hunger were appeased,
Dardanian Priam fixed a wondering look
Upon Achilles, who in nobleness
Of form was like the gods. Achilles fixed
A look of equal wonder on his guest,
Dardanian Priam, for he much admired
His gracious aspect and his pleasant speech.
And when at length they both withdrew their gaze,
Priam, the godlike Ancient, spake, and said:—

“Nursling of Jove, dismiss me speedily
To rest, that we may lie, and be refreshed
With gentle slumbers. Never have these eyes
Been closed beneath their lids, since by thy hand
My Hector lost his life; and evermore
I mourn and cherish all my griefs, and writhe
Upon the ground within my palace courts;
But I have taken food at last, and drunk
Draughts of red wine, untasted till this hour.”

Achilles bade the attending men and maids
Place couches in the porch, and over them
Draw sumptuous purple mats on which to lay
Embroidered tapestries, and on each of these
Spread a broad, fleecy mantle, covering all.
Forth went the train with torches in their hands,
And quickly spread two couches. Then the swift
Achilles pleasantly to Priam said:—

“Sleep, excellent old man, without the tent,
Lest some one of our counselors arrive,
Such as oft come within my tent to sit
And talk of warlike matters. Seeing thee
In the dark hours of night, he might relate
The tale to Agamemnon, king of men,
And hinder thus the ransom of thy son.

But say, and truly say, how many days
Requiest thou to pay the funeral rites
To noble Hector, so that I may rest
As many, and restrain the troops from war."

Then answered godlike Priam, aged king:
"Since, then, thou wilt, Achilles, that we pay
The rites of burial to my noble son,
I own the favor. Well thou knowest how
We Trojans are constrained to keep within
The city walls, for it is far to bring
Wood from the mountains, and we fear to dare
The journey. Nine days would we mourn the dead
Within our dwellings, and upon the tenth
Would bury him, and make a solemn feast,
And the next day would rear his monument,
And on the twelfth, if needful, fight again."

And swift Achilles, godlike chief, rejoined:
"Be it, O reverend Priam, as thou wilt,
And for that space will I delay the war."

He spake, and that the aged king might feel
No fear, he grasped his right hand at the wrist;
And then King Priam and the herald went
To sleep within the porch, but wary still.
Achilles slumbered in his stately tent,
And all the other gods and men who fought
In chariots gave themselves to slumber, save
Beneficent Hermes; sleep came not to him,
For still he meditated how to bring
King Priam back from the Achaian fleet
Unnoticed by the watchers at the gate.
So at the monarch's head he stood, and spake:—

"O aged king, thou givest little heed
To danger, sleeping thus amid thy foes,
Because Achilles spares thee. Thou hast paid

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Large ransom for thy well-beloved son,
And yet the sons whom thou hast left in Troy
Would pay three times that ransom for thy life,
Should Agamemnon, son of Atreus, learn—
Or any of the Greeks—that thou art here.”

He spake: the aged king in fear awaked
The herald. Hermes yoked the steeds and mules,
And drave them quickly through the camp unmarked
By any there. But when they reached the ford
Where Xanthus, progeny of Jupiter,
Rolls the smooth eddies of his stream, the god
Departed for the Olympian height, and Morn
In saffron robes o’erspread the Earth with light.
Townward they urged the steeds, and as they went
Sorrowed and wailed: the mules conveyed the dead,
And they were seen by none of all the men
And graceful dames of Troy save one alone.
Cassandra, beautiful as Venus, stood
On Pergamus, and from its height discerned
Her father, standing on the chariot-seat,
And knew the herald, him whose voice so oft
Summoned the citizens, and knew the dead
Stretched on a litter drawn by mules. She raised
Her voice, and called to all the city thus:—

“O Trojan men and women, hasten forth
To look on Hector, if ye e’er rejoiced
To see him coming from the field alive,
The pride of Troy, and all who dwell in her.”

She spake, and suddenly was neither man
Nor woman left within the city bounds.
Deep grief was on them all; they went to meet,
Near to the gates, the monarch bringing home
The dead. And first the wife whom Hector loved
Rushed with his reverend mother to the car

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

As it rolled on, and, plucking out their hair,
 Touched with their hands the forehead of the dead,
 While round it pressed the multitude, and wept,
 And would have wept before the gates all day,
 Even to the set of sun, in bitter grief
 For Hector's loss, had not the aged man
 Addressed the people from his chariot-seat:
 "Give place to me, and let the mules pass on,
 And ye may weep your fill when once the dead
 Is laid within the palace." As he spake,
 The throng gave way and let the chariot pass;
 And having brought it to the royal halls,
 On a fair couch they laid the corse, and placed
 Singers beside it, leaders of the dirge,
 Who sang a sorrowful, lamenting strain,
 And all the women answered it with sobs.
 White-armed Andromache in both her hands
 Took warlike Hector's head, and over it
 Began the lamentation midst them all:—

"Thou hast died young, my husband, leaving me
 In this thy home a widow, and one son,
 An infant yet. To an unhappy pair
 He owes his birth, and never will, I fear,
 Bloom into youth; for ere that day will Troy
 Be overthrown, since thou, its chief defense,
 Art dead, the guardian of its walls and all
 Its noble matrons and its speechless babes,
 Yet to be carried captive far away,
 And I among them, in the hollow barks;
 And thou, my son, wilt either go with me,
 Where thou shalt toil at menial tasks for some
 Pitiless master; or perhaps some Greek
 Will seize thy little arm, and in his rage
 Will hurl thee from a tower and dash thee dead,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Remembering how thy father, Hector, slew
His brother, son, or father; for the hand
Of Hector forced full many a Greek to bite
The dust of earth. Not slow to smite was he
In the fierce conflict; therefore all who dwell
Within the city sorrow for his fall.
Thou bringest an unutterable grief,
O Hector, on thy parents, and on me
The sharpest sorrows. Thou didst not stretch forth
Thy hands to me, in dying, from thy couch,
Nor speak a word to comfort me, which I
Might ever think of night and day with tears."

So spake the weeping wife: the women all
Mingled their wail with hers, and Hecuba
Took up the passionate lamentation next:—

"O Hector, thou who wert most fondly loved
Of all my sons! While yet thou wert alive,
Dear wert thou to the gods, who even now,
When death has overtaken thee, bestow
Such care upon thee. All my other sons
Whom swift Achilles took in war he sold
At Samos, Imbrus, by the barren sea,
And Lemnos harborless. But as for thee,
When he had taken with his cruel spear
Thy life, he dragged thee round and round the tomb
Of his young friend, Patroclus, whom thy hand
Had slain, yet raised he not by this the dead;
And now thou liest in the palace here,
Fresh and besprinkled as with early dew,
Like one just slain with silent arrows aimed
By Phœbus, bearer of the silver bow."

Weeping she spake, and woke in all who heard
Grief without measure. Helen, last of all,
Took up the lamentation, and began:—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“O Hector, who wert dearest to my heart
Of all my husband’s brothers,—for the wife
Am I of godlike Paris, him whose fleet
Brought me to Troy,—would I had sooner died!
And now the twentieth year is past since first
I came a stranger from my native shore,
Yet have I never heard from thee a word
Of anger or reproach. And when the sons
Of Priam, and his daughters, and the wives
Of Priam’s sons, in all their fair array,
Taunted me grievously, or Hecuba
Herself,—for Priam ever was to me
A gracious father,—thou didst take my part
With kindly admonitions, and restrain
Their tongues with soft address and gentle words.
Therefore my heart is grieved, and I bewail
Thee and myself at once,—unhappy me!
For now I have no friend in all wide Troy,—
None to be kind to me: they hate me all.”

Weeping she spake: the mighty throng again
Answered with wailing. Priam then addressed
The people: “Now bring wood, ye men of Troy,
Into the city. Let there be no fear
Of ambush from the Greeks, for when of late
I left Achilles at the dark-hulled barks,
He gave his promise to molest no more
The men of Troy till the twelfth morn shall rise.”

He spake, and speedily they yoked the mules
And oxen to the wains, and came in throngs
Before the city walls. Nine days they toiled
To bring the trunks of trees, and when the tenth
Arose to light the abodes of men, they brought
The corse of valiant Hector from the town

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With many tears, and laid it on the wood
High up, and flung the fire to light the pile.

Now when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Looked forth, the people gathered round the pile
Of glorious Hector. When they all had come
Together, first they quenched the funeral fires,
Wherever they had spread, with dark-red wine,
And then his brothers and companions searched
For the white bones. In sorrow and in tears,
That streaming stained their cheeks, they gathered them,
And placed them in a golden urn. O'er this
They drew a covering of soft purple robes,
And laid it in a hollow grave, and piled
Fragments of rock above it, many and huge.
In haste they reared the tomb, with sentries set
On every side, lest all too soon the Greeks
Should come in armor to renew the war.
When now the tomb was built, the multitude
Returned, and in the halls where Priam dwelt,
Nursling of Jove, were feasted royally.
Such was the mighty Hector's burial rite.

Homer

38 THE LOTOS-EATERS¹

“**C**OURAGE!” he said, and pointed toward the land,
“This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.”
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.

¹ Ulysses, in the ninth book of the *Odyssey*, tells King Alcinous of his experience in the land of the Lotophagi, or Lotus-Eaters. He was swept from his course, he says, and driven wandering past Cythera. “Thence for nine whole days was I borne by ruinous winds over the teeming deep; but on the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotus-eaters, who eat a flowery food. So we stepped ashore and drew water, and straightway my company took their midday meal by the swift ships. Now when we had tasted meat and drink I sent forth certain of my company to go and make

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

search what manner of men they were who here live upon the earth by bread, and I chose out two of my fellows, and sent a third with them as herald. Then straightway they went and mixed with the men of the lotus-eaters, and so it was that the lotus-eaters devised not death for our fellows, but gave them of the lotus to taste. Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotus-eating men, ever feeding on the lotus, and forgetful of his homeward way. Therefore I led them back to the ships weeping, and sore against their will, and dragged them beneath the benches, and bound them in the hollow barques. But I commanded the rest of my well-loved company to make speed and go on board the swift ships, lest haply any should eat of the lotus and be forgetful of returning. Right soon they embarked and sat upon the benches, and sitting orderly they smote the gray sea water with their oars." (The translation, by Butcher and Lang, is reprinted with the permission of Macmillan & Co., Ltd.)

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more";
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

CHORIC SONG

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

II

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"—
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears; but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The gods are hard to reconcile;
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propped on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet—while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly—
With half-dropped eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is
blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was
seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in
the sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
curled

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and
fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and
praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centered in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered—
down in hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

Alfred Tennyson

39

NISUS AND EURYALUS¹

ON the fall of Troy, Æneas with a company of fellow fugitives sets sail, and after long years and many adventures reaches Italy, his destination, and disembarks on the south bank of the Tiber. Here his followers are still encamped. War has broken out between Æneas and certain of the surrounding nations, and now, while he is himself gone to Pallanteum in quest of an ally, his leaderless band has been attacked by Turnus, king of the Rutuli. On guard at the gate of the Trojan fortifications stand the bosom friends Nisus and Euryalus. The time is night.

The Trojans are sometimes spoken of as the Teucrians or Dardans. The son of Æneas is named both Iulus and Ascanius. Latinus is king of the Latins, one of the nations hostile to Æneas.

Nisus, keen warrior, held the gate, the son
Of Hyrtacus, whom in Æneas' train
Ida the huntress sent; quick-handed he

¹ From the ninth book of the *Æneid*. The translation is by James Rhoades, and is reprinted through special arrangement with the Oxford University Press.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With spear, and light-winged arrows; beside him
Euryalus, than whom no comelier youth
Clave to Æneas, or donned Trojan arms—
Whose smooth boy-face showed faint the budding man.
These had one heart between them: side by side
They wont to rush on battle; and now too
Each with like charge was posted at the gate.
Quoth Nisus: “Is’t the gods thus fire our hearts,
Or maketh each his wild desire a god,
Euryalus? My heart’s long since afret
On war to launch me, or some great essay,
With stagnant ease ill-satisfied. Thou seest
What confidence in fortune holds the foe:
Few gleam their lights and far; themselves lie prone,
In sleep and wine dissolved; all’s hushed around.
Mark further what I muse of, in my mind
What purpose rises. ’Tis the cry of all,
Both folk and fathers, that we summon back
Æneas, send messengers with tidings sure.
If what I ask they promise thee—myself
The deed’s own fame suffices—’neath yon mound
Methinks my feet would guide me to the walls
And fort of Pallanteum.” Euryalus,
Thrilled and transfixed with mighty love of praise,
Thus at the word his glowing friend bespeaks:
“Nisus, dost shun to knit me to thy side
In high exploit? Or should I let thee go
To face such perils singly? ’Twas not thus
My sire Opheltes, to war’s work inured,
’Mid Argive terrors and the woes of Troy
Trained me and reared; nor at thy side have I
So borne me, since I followed to the field
High-souled Æneas and his utmost fate.
Here, here’s a soul that scorns the sunlight, deems

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

That fame thou striv'st for cheaply bought with life."
 Then Nisus: "No such fear of thee had I,
 Nor just it were; nay, so may mighty Jove,
 Or whoso on these things bends favoring eye,
 Restore me to thy side in triumph. But if—
 As oft in such adventure thou behold'st—
 Some chance or god should hurry me to harm,
 I would that thou survive me. At thine age
 It is more meet to live. Oh, be there one
 To lay me, snatched or ransomed from the fray,
 In earth, or, if some wonted hap forbid,
 Pay funeral offerings to my absent dust,
 And grace me with a tomb! Nor let me bring
 Such grief on that sad mother, who, alone
 Of many mothers, dared follow thee, her boy,¹
 And hath no heart for great Acestes' town."
 But he: "Thou weavest empty pleas in vain,
 Nor doth my purpose alter or give way.
 Speed we betimes!" He spake, and roused the watch,
 Who to their charge succeed, then quits his post,
 And, step by step with Nisus, seeks the prince.

All creatures else on earth were easing care
 With slumber, and their hearts forgot to ache.
 The foremost Teucrian lords, their flower of war,
 Were kingdom's weal debating—what to do,
 Who to Æneas should the tidings bear.
 Leaning on their long spears, and shield on arm,
 Midmost the camp in a clear space they stood.
 Then Nisus and with him Euryalus
 In eager haste crave audience: what they urged
 Was weighty, and would recompense delay.
 Iulus first to their impatient suit

¹ In general, the older and less hardy of the Trojan company had been left behind, in Sicily, to found a colony under the rule of King Acestes. The mother of Euryalus was an exception.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Gave audience, and bade Nisus speak; then thus
The son of Hyrtacus: "O sons of Troy,
Hearken with kindly heed, nor let the worth
Of what we offer by our years be weighed.
Dissolved in wine and sleep, the Rutuli
Keep silence: our own eyes have marked a spot
For stratagem left open, where yon gate
Lets in or out upon the seaward side.
Their line of fires is broken, and black smoke
Goes up to heaven. Let us but use the chance
To seek Æneas and Pallanteum's fort,
Soon will ye see us here at hand with spoils,
After great slaughter done. Nor will the way
We go beguile us: down the valleys dim,
Assiduous in the chase, we have seen gleam
The city, and all the river-windings know."
Alcetes hereupon, with years o'erweighed
And ripe of wisdom, spake: "Gods of our sires,
Whose power divine still watches over Troy,
Howbeit, ye think not a full end to make
Of all the Teucrians, in that ye vouchsafe
Our youth such valor and heart-steadfastness."
So saying, the shoulders and right hands of both
Embraced he, and bathed all his face with tears.
"What guerdon, heroes, of your glorious deeds
Can I deem worthy to be paid you? First
Heaven and your own hearts will the best bestow;
Then good Æneas, what else remains anon
Will yield you, and Ascanius, whose fresh youth
Service so noble never can forget."
"Nay I," breaks in Ascanius, "whose sole hope
Of safety hangs upon my sire's return,
By the great hearth-gods, Nisus, thee adjure,
The guardian spirit of Assaracus,

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And hoary Vesta's shrine; whate'er I have
 Of faith or fortune in your laps I lay:
 Bring back my sire, restore him to my sight:
 He here again, grief is not. Goblets twain
 Silver-wrought, rough with tracery, will I give,
 Ta'en by my sire, what time he smote and quelled
 Arisba, and twin tripods, and of gold
 Two mighty talents, and a bowl of yore,
 Sidonian Dido's gift. But if our lot
 Be to take Italy, to win and wield
 A conqueror's scepter, and mete out the spoil—
 Thou sawest the war-steed whereon Turnus rode
 In arms, all golden—none but that, with shield
 And ruddy plume, O Nisus, will I pluck
 Forth from the lot, thine even from this day.
 Matrons twice six beside of choicest form
 My sire will give thee, and men-captives eke,
 All with their armor, and of land, to boot,
 What King Latinus hath for his domain.
 But thee, thrice honored youth, whose age my own
 Doth in the race press closer, from this hour
 To my whole heart I take, betide what may,
 And clasp thee for my comrade. Without thee,
 For mine own lot no glory shall be wooed;
 Come peace or war, to thee, both deed and word,
 Be all my heart unbosomed." Answered then
 Euryalus: "From such bold venture me
 No time shall prove degenerate, let but Fate
 Be kind, not cruel. But all gifts beyond,
 One boon I beg: I have a mother sprung
 From Priam's ancient race, whom Ilian land
 Held not, poor soul, nor king Acestes' town
 From faring forth with me. Her now I leave
 Unwitting of this peril, whatsoc'er,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Aye, and ungreeted—Night and thy right hand
My witness be—for that I may not brook
A parent's weeping. But do thou, I pray,
Comfort her need and aid her loneliness.
Let me bear hence this hope of thee: hereby
Into all dangers I shall boldlier go.”
Touched to the heart, the Dardans wept, and fair
Iulus before all, whose soul was wrung
With likeness of the love he bore his sire.
Then thus he speaks: “Assure thee of all done
That thy great exploit merits: for she shall be
As my own mother, lacking but the name
Crëusa; nor slight honor waits the womb
That bore so nobly. Let what fortune may
Be the deed's sequel, by this head I vow,
As oft my sire was wont, whate'er to thee
I promise, prosperously returned, the same
Shall for thy mother and thy kin abide.”
Weeping he spake, and from his shoulder doffs
A gilded sword, which erst Lycaon of Crete
Wrought with rare skill, and fitted for the hand
With ivory sheath. A shaggy lion's hide
Mnestheus to Nisus gives; Aletes true
Makes interchange of helmets. Thus arrayed
Onward they move, whom all the band of chiefs,
Both young and old, escorting to the gates,
Follow with vows. And fair Iulus too,
Armed with man's thought and spirit beyond his years,
Full many a message to his sire bade bear.
But one and all the rude winds rend amain,
And to the clouds consign them unfulfilled.
Thence issuing forth, they cross the trench, and seek
Through shades of night the foeman's camp—yet first
To be the death of many. In drunken sleep

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Stretched on the greensward scattered forms they see,
Cars tilted on the beach, 'twixt wheels and reins
Their masters, and with these one litter of arms
And wine. First spake the son of Hyrtacus:
"Now for a bold stroke! now, Euryalus,
The deed itself invites; here lies our way.
Watch thou, and keep wide outlook, lest some hand
Should from behind assail us: here will I
Deal havoc, and by a broad lane lead thee on."
He spake, then checks his utterance, and lets drive
At haughty Rhamnes, who, it chanced, high-propped
On heapèd carpets, the full-chested breath
Of sleep was heaving—king himself, and seer,
Best-loved of kingly Turnus; but no whit
His seer-craft might avail to ward off doom.
Three of his folk hard by, at random laid
Among their weapons, he takes unaware,
And the armor-bearer, aye, and chariotceer,
Of Remus, close beside his horses caught,
And with the sword shears through their lolling necks;
Then from their lord himself he lops the head,
And leaves the red trunk gurgling; with black gore
Reek couch and greensward. Lamyrus withal,
Lamus, and young Serranus, who that night
Had played full long, and in his beauty's pride
Lay there limb-vanquished by the o'erpotent god—
Ah! happier had he played a night-long bout,
Nor made an end till morn!—such havoc as when
An unfed lion, ravaging amid
Full sheepfolds—for mad famine goads him on—
Mangles and rends the mild flock mute with fear,
And roars with blood-stained mouth. Nor less meanwhile
The slaughter of Euryalus; he too
Rages like fire, and, as they blocked his path,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Falls on a vast and nameless crowd, and slays
 Fadus, Herbesus, Rhoetus, Abaris,
 Or ere they knew it. Rhoetus awake saw all,
 But crouched in fear behind a mighty bowl;
 Full in whose breast, as up he rose, the youth
 At arm's length, to the hilt, his sword-blade plunged,
 And steeped in death withdrew it. He pours forth
 The red life, dying, and blood-mingled wine;
 The other on his dark errand hotly hies.
 Now was he making for Messapus' train,
 Where the last gleams of dying fire, and steeds
 Tethered arow, and grazing, he beheld,
 When Nisus briefly—for he saw him borne
 Beyond all bounds with lust of carnage—cried:
 "Forbear we now; the unfriendly dawn draws nigh.
 We have drunk full deep of vengeance, through the foe
 Hewed out a passage." Many a trophy fair—
 Men's arms of solid silver wrought, and bowls,
 And sumptuous coverlets, they leave behind.
 Euryalus the trappings tears away
 And gold-bossed belt of Rhamnes, which of yore
 Right wealthy Caedicus sent as a gift
 To Remulus of Tibur, when from far
 For friend he sought him: to his grandson's hand
 Dying he left them, by the Rutule host
 After his death in war and battle won.
 These he tears off, and on his shoulders brave
 Binds, but in vain, then dons Messapus' helm
 Well-fitted, plume-adorned. So forth from camp
 They pass, and make for safety.

But meanwhile

Horsemen, sent forward from the Latin town,
 While halts the main host on the plain arrayed,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Came bringing answers for King Turnus' ear,
Three hundred, shield-men all, by Volscens led.
Even now they approach the camp, and near the wall,
When at some distance they descry the twain
Rounding the path to leftward; and the helm
In glimmer of night betrayed Euryalus
Unheedful, and flashed back the opposing ray:
Nor seen for naught. Cries Volscens from his troop:
"Stand, warriors; wherefore thus afoot? and say
Who are ye that go armed, and whither fare?"
Naught urge they in reply, but speed amain
Into the woods, and trust them to the night.
The horsemen interpose, bar right and left
The well-known crossways, and with sentinels
Fringe every outlet. The wood bristled wide
With brambles and dark ilex, every way
Choked with impenetrable thorns; the path
Through the dim forest-tracks gleamed brokenly.
Euryalus by darkness of the boughs
Perplexed, and spoil-encumbered, is by fear
Fooled of his bearings. Nisus wins clear off:
And now, all heedless, he had passed the foe,
And region, afterward from Alba's name
Hight Alban—then the lofty cattle-stalls
Of King Latinus—when he stopped, looked back
For his lost friend, in vain. "Euryalus,
Unhappy one! where have I left thee? how
Follow, and unthrid all the tangled path
Of treacherous woodland?" Therewith, questing back,
His footsteps he retraces, roaming on
Through the hushed brakes. He hears the horses' tread,
Hears the loud din and signals of pursuit.
Nor long the time till to his ear a shout

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Comes, and he sees Euryalus, whom trapped
By the false ground and darkness, and confused
By sudden onslaught, the whole band even now
Hale onward, struggling valiantly, in vain.
What can he do? Say, with what force, what arms
A rescue dare? Or should he rush on doom
Amid the sword-blades, and precipitate
Through wounds a glorious death? Quick drawing back
His arm, and brandishing a spear, he looks
Up to the moon in heaven, and prays aloud:
"Thou, goddess, thou, Latona's child, be near
To aid my effort, glory of the stars
And guardian of the groves; if Hyrtacus
My sire hath ever to thine altars brought
Gifts for my sake, if any I myself
Have added from the chase, and in thy dome
Hung them, or fastened to thy sacred roof,
Let me confound this banded mass, and guide
My darts through air." He spake, and hurls the steel
With his whole body's strength. The flying spear
Sunders the shades of night, meets the turned back
Of Sulmo, and there snaps, the splintered shaft
Riving his heart: he, spouting from his breast
The hot life-stream, rolls over, chilled in death,
And long gasps heave his palpitating sides.
All eyes look every way. He thereupon
The keenlier poises, see! a second dart
Aimed from the ear-tip. While they hesitate,
Through Tagus' either temple sped the spear
Hissing, and clave warm in the piercèd brain.
Volscens storms fiercely, but can nowhere spy
The wielder of the weapon, nor whereon
To launch his fury. "Thou at least," he cried,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

"Shalt with thy life-blood pay the debt of both,"
 And so drew sword, and on Euryalus
 Was rushing. Then indeed, with terror mad,
 Nisus shrieks wildly, nor can shroud himself
 Longer in darkness, or such anguish bear:
 "Here, here am I, the doer, on me, on me
 Turn all your steel, O Rutules! Mine the fault,
 Mine only: he nor dared, nor could have done it;
 This heaven, these stars, be witness, that know all!
 He only loved his hapless friend too well."
 So spake he; but the sword, with strength driven home,
 Has pierced the ribs, and rends the snowy breast.
 Euryalus rolls in death; the blood runs o'er
 His beauteous limbs, and on his shoulder sinks
 The faint neck: as a bright flower, by the plow
 Shorn through, droops dying, or poppies weary-necked,
 By a chance shower o'er-weighted, bow the head.
 But Nisus leaps amidst them, seeks through all
 Volscens alone, for none but Volscens stays.
 The foe, massed round him close on either side,
 Beat him aback. Nathless he presses on,
 And whirls his lightning blade, till, plunging it
 Full in the shouting Rutule's face, he reft,
 Dying, the foeman's life, then, pierced with wounds,
 Flung him upon his lifeless friend, and there
 At last lay pillowed calm in death's repose.

Ah! happy pair! if aught my verse avail,
 No lapse of hours from time's recording page
 Shall e'er erase you, while Æneas' house
 Dwells on the Capitol's unshaken rock,
 And the great Roman sire holds sovereignty.

Virgil

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

I READ, before my eyelids dropped their shade,
“The Legend of Good Women,” long ago
Sung by the morning star of song, who made
His music heard below;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art
Held me above the subject, as strong gales
Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho’ my heart,
Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In every land
I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient song
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning stars,
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars;

And clattering flints battered with clanging hoofs;
And I saw crowds in columned sanctuaries,
And forms that passed at windows and on roofs
Of marble palaces;

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Corpses across the threshold, heroes tall
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall,
Lances in ambush set;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with heated blasts
That run before the fluttering tongues of fire;
White surf wind-scattered over sails and masts,
And ever climbing higher;

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates,
Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes,
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates,
And hushed seraglios.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self-same way,
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand,
Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seemed to start in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove to speak,
As when a great thought strikes along the brain
And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,
That bore a lady from a leaguered town;
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing thought
Streamed onward, lost their edges, and did creep
Rolled on each other, rounded, smoothed, and brought
Into the gulfs of sleep.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

At last methought that I had wandered far
In an old wood; fresh-washed in coolest dew
The maiden splendors of the morning star
Shook in the steadfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree boles did stoop and lean
Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest green,
New from its silken sheath.

The dim red Morn had died, her journey done,
And with dead lips smiled at the twilight plain,
Half-fallen across the threshold of the sun,
Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,
Not any song of bird or sound of rill;
Gross darkness of the inner sepulcher
Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine turned
Their humid arms festooning tree to tree,
And at the root thro' lush green grasses burned
The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I knew
The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drenched in dew,
Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
Poured back into my empty soul and frame
The times when I remember to have been
Joyful and free from blame.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And from within me a clear undertone
Thrilled thro' mine ears in that unblissful clime,
"Pass freely thro'; the wood is all thine own
Until the end of time."

At length I saw a lady within call,
Stillier than chiseled marble, standing there;
A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with surprise
Froze my swift speech; she turning on my face
The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
Spoke slowly in her place:

"I had great beauty; ask thou not my name:
No one can be more wise than destiny.
Many drew swords and died. Where'er I came
I brought calamity."

"No marvel, sovereign lady: in fair field
Myself for such a face had boldly died,"
I answered free; and turning I appealed
To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,
To her full height her stately stature draws:
"My youth," she said, "was blasted with a curse:
This woman was the cause.

"I was cut off from hope in that sad place
Which men called Aulis in those iron years:
My father held his hand upon his face;
I, blinded with my tears,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Still strove to speak: my voice was thick with sighs
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish eyes,
Waiting to see me die.

“The high masts flickered as they lay afloat;
The crowds, the temples, wavered, and the shore;
The bright death quivered at the victim’s throat—
Touched—and I knew no more.”

Whereto the other with a downward brow:
“I would the white cold heavy-plunging foam,
Whirled by the wind, had rolled me deep below,
Then when I left my home.”

Her slow full words sank thro’ the silence drear,
As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea:
Sudden I heard a voice that cried, “Come here,
That I may look on thee.”

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,
One sitting on a crimson scarf unrolled;
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,
Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:
“I governed men by change, and so I swayed
All moods. ’Tis long since I have seen a man.
Once, like the moon, I made

“The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humor ebb and flow.
I have no men to govern in this wood:
That makes my only woe.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not bend
One will; nor tame and tutor with mine eye
That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prythee, friend,
Where is Mark Antony?”

“The man, my lover, with whom I rode sublime
On Fortune’s neck; we sat as god by god:
The Nilus would have risen before his time
And flooded at our nod.

“We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and lit
Lamps which out-burned Canopus. O, my life
In Egypt! O, the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

“And the wild kiss, when fresh from war’s alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die!

“And there he died: and when I heard my name
Sighed forth with life, I would not brook my fear
Of the other; with a worm I balked his fame.
What else was left? look here!”—

With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polished argent of her breast to sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a laugh,
Showing the aspic’s bite.—

“I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found
Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,
A name for ever!—lying robed and crowned,
Worthy a Roman spouse.”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance
From tone to tone, and glided through all change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for delight;
Because with sudden motion from the ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and filled with light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipped his keenest darts:
As once they drew into two burning rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming through the lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn:

“The torrent brooks of hallowed Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and soon,
Sound all night long, in falling through the dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

“The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams divine;
All night the splintered crags that wall the dell
With spires of silver shine.”

As one that museth where broad sunshine laves
The lawn by some cathedral, through the door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Within, and anthem sung, is charmed and tied
To where he stands,—so stood I, when that flow
Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow;

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpah's towered gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.¹

My words leapt forth: "Heaven heads the count of crimes
With that wild oath." She rendered answer high:
"Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

"Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower; but ere my flower to fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

"My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lowered softly with a threefold cord of love
Down to a silent grave.

¹ Jephtha's daughter, whose story is told in the eleventh chapter of *Judges*. Her father made a vow to the Lord that if he were given the victory over the Ammonites he would offer up for a burnt offering whatsoever on his return from the wars should come forth to meet him from the doors of his house. He was successful, and smote the enemy "from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith," but when he went home, "behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." She was his only child. She acquiesced in the fulfillment of the vow, indeed half insisted upon it, asking only a brief respite from her doom: "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows." (Compare the similar story in Landor's *Iphigenia and Agamemnon*, above, p. 248.)

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“And I went mourning, ‘No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers’—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

“Leaving the olive-gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

“The light white cloud swam over us. Anon
We heard the lion roaring from his den;
We saw the large white stars rise one by one,
Or, from the darkened glen,

“Saw God divide the night with flying flame,
And thunder on the everlasting hills.
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became
A solemn scorn of ills.

“When the next moon was rolled into the sky,
Strength came to me that equaled my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

“It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father’s will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

“Moreover it is written that my race
Hewed Ammon, hip and thigh, from Arocr
On Arnon unto Minnith.” Here her face
Glowed, as I looked at her.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

She locked her lips; she left me where I stood:

“Glory to God,” she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the somber boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning star.

Losing her carol, I stood pensively,

As one that from a casement leans his head,
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,
And the old year is dead.

“Alas! alas!” a low voice, full of care,

Murmured beside me: “Turn and look on me;
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.”¹

“Would I had been some maiden coarse and poor!

O me, that I should ever see the light!
Those dragon eyes of angered Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night.”

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and trust;

To whom the Egyptian: “O, you tamely died!
You should have clung to Fulvia’s waist, and thrust
The dagger thro’ her side.”²

With that sharp sound the white dawn’s creeping beams,
Stol’n to my brain, dissolved the mystery
Of folded sleep. The captain of my dreams
Ruled in the eastern sky.

¹ “Fair Rosamond,” the mistress of King Henry II of England, was killed, according to legend, by the King’s wife, Eleanor.

² Fulvia was the wife of Mark Antony, and was therefore hated by the speaker—Cleopatra—as a rival.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Morn broadened on the borders of the dark
Ere I saw her who clasped in her last trance
Her murdered father's head,¹ or Joan of Arc,
A light of ancient France;

Or her who knew that Love can vanquish Death,
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king,
Drew forth the poison with her balmy breath,
Sweet as new buds in spring.²

No memory labors longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden ore
That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what dull pain
Compassed, how eagerly I sought to strike
Into that wondrous track of dreams again!
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been blest,
Desiring what is mingled with past years,
In yearnings that can never be expressed
By signs or groans or tears;

¹ Sir Thomas More was beheaded on the morning of July 6, 1535. According to one of his sixteenth-century biographers, his head, which was put on a pole and exhibited on London Bridge, was privately purchased by his favorite daughter, Margaret, within a month of its exposure, and was preserved by her in spices until her death in 1544. (*Dictionary of National Biography*, article on Sir Thomas More.) Margaret "was buried at St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, but in the year 1715 the vault was opened, and it is stated that she was found in her coffin, clasping the small leaden box which inclosed her father's head [from the author's note]."

² Edward I of England, while on a crusade, was wounded by an assassin's dagger, which was believed to have been poisoned. According to legend, his beautiful queen, Eleanor of Castile, sucked the poison from the wound and thus saved his life.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Because all words, tho' culled with choicest art,
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

Alfred Tennyson

41

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA¹

*D*ANTE, guided by the shade of Virgil, is journeying downward through the nine circles of Hell, and has arrived at the second, to which those are doomed who have sinned through sensuality.

From the first circle thus I made descent
Down to the second, whose contracted rim
Girdles so much more woe it goads lament.²
There Minos stands and snarls with clamor grim,
Examines the transgressions at the gate,
Judges, and sends as he encircles him.
Yea, when the spirit born to evil fate
Before him comes confessing all, that fell
Distinguisher among the reprobate,³
Seeing what place belongs to it in Hell,
Entwines him with his tail such times as show
How many circles down he bids it dwell.
Always before him many wait; they go
All turn by turn to sentence for their sin:
They tell and hear and then are whirled below.

¹ The fifth canto of the *Inferno*. From Anderson's *Divine Comedy*, copyright, 1921, by World Book Company, publishers, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York.

² The pain is so great that the sufferers cry out.

³ The "fell distinguisher" is Minos.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

“O thou that comest to the woeful inn!”

As soon as he beheld me, Minos cried,

Leaving the act of so great discipline,¹

“Beware to enter, beware in whom confide,

Be not deceived by wideness of the door.”—

“Why dost thou also clamor?” said my Guide,

“Bar not his going fated from before:

Thus it is willed up yonder where is might

To bring the will to pass, and ask no more.”—

And now the notes of woe begin to smite

The hollow of mine ear; now am I come

Where I am pierced by wailings infinite.

I came into a place of all light dumb,

Which bellows like a sea where thunders roll

And counter-winds contend for masterdom.

The infernal hurricane beyond control

Sweeps on and on with ravishment malign

Whirling and buffeting each hapless soul.

When by the headlong tempest hurled supine,

Here are the shrieks, the moaning, the laments,

Here they blaspheme the puissance divine.

I learned that to such sorry recompense .

Are damned the sinners of the carnal sting,

Who make the reason thrall to appetite.

And as great flocks of starlings on the wing

In winter time together trooping go,

So did that blast the wicked spirits fling

Now here, now there, now up, and now below:

Comfort of hope to them is never known

Either of rest or even less bitter woe.

And as the pilgrim cranes from zone to zone

Draw out their aery file and chant the dirge,

¹ Turning aside from his duties as judge.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

So saw I, and I heard them making moan,
Shadows who on that storm-blast whirl and surge:
Whence I: "Who, Master, are those tempest-flung,
Round whom the black air whistles like a scourge?"—
"The first," said he, "that multitude among,
Of whom thou seekest knowledge more precise,
Was empress over many a tribe and tongue.
Abandoned so was she to wanton vice
That, her own stigma so to wipe away,
Lust was made licit by her law device.¹
That is Semiramis,—as annals say,
Consort of Ninus and successor too;
Where governs now the Soldan, she held sway.
The next one, lo! herself for love she slew
And to Sichæus' urn her faith dismissed;²
Next wanton Cleopatra comes to view;
Now lookest thou on Helen, whose acquist³
Brought evil years; and great Achilles see
Who found in Love his last antagonist.⁴
Look, Paris, Tristan . . ." and he pointed me
A thousand shades, and named me every name,
Who in our life gave Love the victory.
When I had heard my Teacher many a dame
Of old enumerate, and many a knight,
Pity assailed me and almost overcame.
"Poet," began I, "fain would I invite
Speech with those twain who go a single way
And seem upon the wind to be so light."—

¹ She made sensual indulgence lawful.

² Dido of Carthage, who, as represented in the *Æneid*, killed herself for love of Æneas, had sworn eternal fidelity to her dead husband, Sichæus.

³ The acquiring or abduction of whom.

⁴ Achilles did not long survive Hector. He became enamored of a daughter of Priam, and on going to the temple of Apollo to be married was treacherously slain by Paris.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And he made answer: "Thou shalt mark when they
Draw near to us, and then adjure them by
The love that leads them, and they will obey."—
Thereafter when a whirlwind swept them nigh
I lifted up my voice: "O souls forspent,
Come and have speech with us if none deny."—
As doves to the heart's call obedient
Are borne along to the belovèd nest
On wide and steady pinions homeward bent,
So these came tow'rd us through the air unblest,
Veering from Dido and her multitude,
So tender and so strong was my request.¹
"O living creature full of grace and good
Who goest through the dusk air visiting
Us who left earth encrimsoned with our blood.
If friendly were the Universal King
We would be praying to Him for thy peace,
Seeing thou pitiest our suffering.
Whatever ye to speak and hear may please,
That will we speak and hear you close at hand,
If yet awhile the wind as now may cease.
The town where I was born sits on the strand
Beside the water where descends the Po
In quest of peace, with his companion band.
Love that in gentle heart is soon aglow
Laid hold on this one² for the person fair
Bereft me, and the mode is still my woe.
Love that doth none beloved from loving spare,
To do him pleasure made my heart so fain
That, as thou seest, not yet doth it forbear.

¹ Francesca, the wife of Giovanni of Rimini, and Paolo, her husband's brother, became lovers; Giovanni, finding them together, killed them. The lines following are spoken to Dante by Francesca.

² Paolo.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Love led us down to death together: Cain¹
Awaits the soul of him who laid us dead.”—
These words from them to us returned again.
Hearing those injured souls, I bowed my head
And held it for so long dejectedly
That, “Whereon thinkest thou?” the Poet said.
When I could answer, I began: “Ah me,
How many tender thoughts, what longing drew
These lovers to the pass of agony.”—
Thereafter I turned to them, and spoke anew:
“Francesca, all thy torments dim mine eyes
With tears that flow for sympathy and rue.
But tell me, in the time of the sweet sighs
By what, and how did Love to you disclose
The vague desires, that ye should realize?”—
And she to me: “It is the woe of woes
Remembrance of the happy time to keep
In misery,—and that thy Teacher knows.”²
But if thy yearning be indeed so deep
To know the first root of a love so dear,
I will do even as they who speak and weep.
One day together read we for good cheer
Of Love, how he laid hold on Launcëlot:
Alone we were and without any fear.
Many and many a time that reading brought
Our eyes to meet, and blancht our faces o’er,
But only one point we resisted not.
When reading of the smile long-awaited-for
Being kissed by such a lover chivalrous,
He never now from me divided more,
Kissed me upon the mouth, all tremulous . . .

¹ A part of the bottommost circle of Hell, to which are sent the murderers of their own kindred. It is named after the slayer of Abel.

² Virgil, Dante’s “Teacher,” was doomed to remain in Hell.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Gallehaut was the book and writer too:¹

That day there was no reading more for us.”—

And while one soul was saying this, for rue

So wept the other, that I fainted all

For pity, even as dying persons do,

And fell, as would a lifeless body fall.

Dante

42

ULYSSES²

*D*ANTE and Virgil, on their way through Hell, have come to the eighth chasm of the eighth circle, where false counselors innumerable, workers of deceit, are swathed each in his separate fire. One flame, cloven at its tip into two prongs, conceals within itself the shades of Ulysses and Diomed. Dante evinces a deep desire to speak with the famous heroes, and Virgil, divining his inmost thought, addresses them in the opening words of the passage. The strange story told by Ulysses is believed to be wholly the invention of Dante's imagination.

“O ye, within one fire remaining two,

If I deserved of you in life, if I

Or much or little merited of you

When in the world I wrote the verses high,

Do not move on, but one of you declare

Whither, being lost, he went away to die.”

One horn, the mightier of the ancient pair,

With murmuring began to quiver then,

Even as a flame made weary by the air.

¹ Gallehaut, according to the account which Paolo and Francesca read, was the confidant of Guinevere and Launcelot in their illicit love. (See the note by H. Oelsner in the “Temple” Dante.)

² Approximately the second half of the twenty-sixth canto of the *Inferno*. From Anderson's *Divine Comedy*, copyright, 1921, by World Book Company, publishers, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Waving the summit back and forth again,
 Thereafter, like a speaking tongue, the flame
 Flung forth a voice and spoke as follows: "When
Of Circe I had taken leave,—the same
 Who held me near Gaeta a year and more,
 Ere yet Æneas gave it such a name,—
Nor tender love of son, nor pity for
 My aged father, nor affection due
 That should have cheered Penelope, o'erborne
The ardor that was in me to pursue
 Experience of the world, that I might be
 In human vices versed and virtue too:
But I put forth on the deep open sea
 With but one vessel, and that little train
 Which hitherto had not deserted me.
Both of the shores I saw as far as Spain,
 Morocco, and Sardinia's isle, and so
 The other islands bathing in that main.
I and my company were old and slow
 When in upon that narrow pass we bore,
 Where Hercules set up his bounds to show
That man beyond might venture nevermore.
 Here left I Seville back upon the right,
 And had left Ceuta on the other shore.
'O brothers,' said I, 'who are come despite
 Ten thousand perils to the West, let none,
 While still our senses hold the vigil slight
Remaining to us ere our course is run,
 Be willing to forgo experience
 Of the unpeopled world beyond the sun.
Regard your origin,—from whom and whence!
 Not to exist like brutes, but made were ye
 To follow virtue and intelligence.'

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With this brief speech I made my company
So keen to go, that scarce to be denied
Would they have been thereafter, even by me.
And having turned the stern to morning-tide,
For the mad flight we plied the wingèd oar,
Steadily gaining on the larboard side.
Night saw the constellations more and more
Of the other pole, and ours at such descent
That it rose not above the ocean-floor.
Five times rekindled and as many spent
The light beneath the moon did wane away,
Since to the passage of the deep we went,
When there appeared to us a mountain, gray
With distance, and upreared a loftier brow
Than I had ever seen until that day.
We joyed, but joy soon turned to weeping now,
For out of the new land a whirling blast
Arose and struck the vessel on the prow—
Thrice with the waters all, it whirled her fast.
The fourth upheaved the stern and sunk amain
The prow, as pleased Another, till at last
The ocean had above us closed again.”

Dante

43

ULYSSES

IT little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known,—cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all,—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things: and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties decent, not to fail

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me,—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads,—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are,—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Alfred Tennyson

AN EPISODE

AND the first gray of morning filled the east,
 And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
 But all the Tartar camp along the stream
 Was hushed, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
 Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long
 He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
 But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,
 He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
 And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
 And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
 Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

¹ The story of Sohrab and Rustum is told in Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, as follows:

"The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burned his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days." [Author's note.]

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Through the black Tartar tents he passed, which stood
Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere:
Through the black tents he passed, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crowned the top
With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick-piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dulled; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:

“Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:
“Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son;
In Samarcand, before the army marched;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
 And beat the Persians back on every field,
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
 Rustum, my father; who, I hoped, should greet,
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
 So I long hoped, but him I never find.
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
 Let the two armies rest to-day: but I
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
 To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
 Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
 Dim is the rumor of a common fight,
 Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:
 But of a single combat Fame speaks clear."

He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand
 Of the young man in his, and sighed, and said:

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
 And share the battle's common chance with us
 Who love thee, but must press forever first,
 In single fight incurring single risk,
 To find a father thou hast never seen?
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us
 Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
 And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight:
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here,
 For now it is not as when I was young,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

When Rustum was in front of every fray:
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seïstan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorred approaches of old age;
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger of death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening? and who govern Rustum's son?
Go! I will grant thee what thy heart desires.”

So said he, and dropped Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,
And o'er his chilly limbs his woolen coat
He passed, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
And on his head he set his sheepskin cap,
Black, glossy, curled, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And raised the curtain of his tent, and called
His herald to his side, and went abroad.

The sun, by this, had risen, and cleared the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they streamed:
As when, some gray November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-necked cranes,
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian seaboard: so they streamed.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheepskin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service owned;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmuks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
These all filed out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians formed:
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seemed,
The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshaled battalions bright in burnished steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And checked his ranks, and fixed them where they stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:

“Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.”

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearlèd ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of traveling birds dead on the snow,
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parched throats with sugared mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o’erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel. Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King:
These came and counseled; and then Gudurz said:

“Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag’s foot, the lion’s heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart:
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man’s name.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried:
"Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."

He spake; and Peran-Wisa turned, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And crossed the camp which lay behind, and reached,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitched: the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camped around.
And Gudurz entered Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood before him, charged with food—
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And played with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he looked, and saw him stand;
And with a cry sprang up, and dropped the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:

"Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."

But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and said:
"Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day: to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose."

He spoke: but Rustum answered with a smile:—
"Go to! If Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older: if the young are weak, the king
Errs strangely: for the king, for Kai-Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honors younger men,
And lets the aged molder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have,
A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-haired Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armor up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply:
"What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,
'Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'"

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

"O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
 But who for men of naught would do great deeds?
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was matched
 In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frowned; and Gudurz turned, and ran
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
 But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and called
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
 And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
 And from the fluted spine atop, a plume
 Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
 So armed, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Followed him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
 Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once
 Did in Bokhara by the river find
 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And reared him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of brodered green
 Crusted with gold; and on the ground were worked
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know:
 So followed, Rustum left his tents, and crossed
 The camp, and to the Persian host appeared.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hailed; but the Tartars knew not who he was.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab armed in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blackened fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whitened window-panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs: long he perused
His spirited air, and wondered who he was.
For very young he seemed, tenderly reared;
Like some young cypress; tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

So slender Sohrab seemed, so softly reared.
And a deep pity entered Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckoned to him with his hand, and said:

“O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be governed: quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.”

So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years,
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streaked with its first gray hairs: hope filled his soul;
And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
And clasped his hand within his own and said:

“Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?”

But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turned away, and spake to his own soul:

“Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say, ‘Rustum is here,’
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-day, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—
'I challenged once, when the two armies camped
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank; only Rustum dared: then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."

And then he turned, and sternly spake aloud:
"Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast called
By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or yield.
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this day, and were revealed,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this:
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield;
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke: and Sohrab answered, on his feet:—
"Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
 But yet success sways with the breath of heaven.
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
 We know not, and no search will make us know:
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.”

He spoke; and Rustum answered not, but hurled
 His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came
 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
 That long has towered in the airy clouds
 Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear
 Hissed, and went quivering down into the sand,
 Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab threw
 In turn, and full struck Rustum’s shield: sharp rang,
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turned the spear.
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but him
 Could wield: an unlopped trunk it was, and huge,
 Still rough; like those which men in treeless plains
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Has made in Himalayan forest wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs; so huge
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
 One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum’s hand.

And Rustum followed his own blow, and fell
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutched the sand:
 And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
 And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand:
 But he looked on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
 But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:

“Thou strik’st too hard: that club of thine will float
 Upon the summer-floods, and not my bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth am I:
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
 Thou say’st thou art not Rustum: be it so.
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
 But never was my heart thus touched before.
 Are they from heaven, these softening of the heart?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to heaven!
 Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,
 And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
 And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum’s deeds.
 There are enough foes in the Persian host
 Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
 Mayst fight; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
 But oh, let there be peace ’twixt thee and me!”

He ceased: but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
 And stood erect, trembling with rage: his club
 He left to lie, but had regained his spear,
 Whose fiery point now in his mailed right-hand
 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,
 The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soiled

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

His stately crest, and dimmed his glittering arms.
His breast heaved; his lips foamed; and twice his voice
Was choked with rage: at last these words broke way:
 "Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curled minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valor; try thy feints
And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."

He spoke: and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword: at once they rushed
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west: their shields
Dashed with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hailed.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in heaven, and darkened the sun
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapped the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapped, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And laboring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but failed to reach the skin,
And Rustum plucked it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
And Rustum bowed his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, uttered a dreadful cry:
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pained desert lion, who all day
Hath trailed the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand:
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it crossed his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quailed not, but rushed on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bowed
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remained alone.
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted, "Rustum!" Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed: back he recoiled one step,
And scanned with blinking eyes the advancing form:
And then he stood bewildered; and he dropped
His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
He reeled, and staggering back, sank to the ground.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:
"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart:
For were I matched with ten such men as thee,
And I were he who till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovèd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarmed foe,
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear!
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And followed her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by:—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss—
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said:
“What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:
“Ah, yes, he had; and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
 With that old king, her father, who grows gray
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
 Her most I pity, who no more will see
 Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
 With spoils and honor, when the war is done.
 But a dark rumor will be bruited up,
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
 And then will that defenseless woman learn
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
 But that in battle with a nameless foe,
 By the far distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke; and as he ceased he wept aloud.
 Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
 He spoke; but Rustum listened, plunged in thought.
 Nor did he yet believe it was his son
 Who spoke, although he called back names he knew;
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
 Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms;
 And so he deemed that either Sohrab took,
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
 So deemed he; yet he listened, plunged in thought;
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
 Of the bright rocking ocean sets to shore
 At the full moon: tears gathered in his eyes;
 For he remembered his own early youth,
 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
 The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds;—so Rustum saw

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old king, her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass;—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:—

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved!
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false;—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son: one child he had—
But one—a girl: who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answered him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:

“Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

I tell thee, pricked upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;
And his knees tottered, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailèd hand,
That the hard iron corslet clanked aloud:
And on his heart he pressed the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake and said:

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And showed a sign in faint vermilion points
Pricked: as a cunning workman, in Peking,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:—
So delicately pricked the sign appeared
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that Griffin, which of old reared Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind creature found, and reared, and loved—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
And himself scanned it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touched it with his hand and said:

“How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?”

He spoke: but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
Speechless; and then he uttered one sharp cry—
“O boy—thy father!”—and his voice choked there.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

And then a dark cloud passed before his eyes;
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawled to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kissed his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life: and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirched his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms:
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutched his sword,
To draw it, and forever let life out.

But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:

“Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down
In heaven, and thou art heaven’s unconscious hand:
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it: but Fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engaged
The strife, and hurled me on my father’s spear.
But let us speak no more of this: I find
My father; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say: ‘My son!’
Quick! quick! for numbered are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in heaven that this should be.”

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

So said he: and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kissed him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one, then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears rolled down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:

“Ruksh, now thou grievest; but O Ruksh, thy feet
Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,
When first they bore thy master to this field.”

But Sohrab looked upon the horse and said:
“Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed!
My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuffed the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Scïstan,
And seen the river of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soaked with wine,
And said—‘O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!’—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrowed face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Scïstan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents, and only drunk
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream—
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.”

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewailed:
“Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!”

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:
“Desire not that, my father: thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age.
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come: thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these:
Let me entreat for them: what have they done?
They followed me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Scïstan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-haired Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all;
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:
‘Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Whom his great father did in ignorance kill'—
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—
"Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be; for I will burn my tents
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seïstan.
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends,
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were called champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have;
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown;
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine; and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seïstan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say—'O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.'
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age;
And I shall never end this life of blood."

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:
"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now:
Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave."

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said:
"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flowed with the stream; all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soiled,
Like the soiled tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gathered, on their native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye; his head drooped low,
His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he opened them,
And fixed them feebly on his father's face;
Till now all strength was ebbcd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead:
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-reared,

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side:
So, in the sand, lay Rustum by his son.

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darkened all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal:
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars, by the river marge:
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon: he flowed
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands began
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents, that for many a league
The shorn and parceled Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles;
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had,
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foiled circuitous wanderer: till at last
The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

Matthew Arnold

45 SATAN AND BEËLZEBUB IN COUNSEL¹

*THE rebel angels, hurled from the battlements
 of heaven, lie rolling on the burning lake.
 Satan addresses his despairing compeer, Beëlzebub.*

“If thou beest he—but oh, how fallen! how changed
 From him who in the happy realms of light,
 Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
 Myriads, though bright! if he whom mutual league,
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined
 In equal ruin: into what pit thou seest
 From what highth fall’n, so much the stronger proved
 He with his thunder: and till then who knew
 The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those,
 Nor what the potent Victor in his rage
 Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,
 Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind,
 And high disdain from sense of injured merit,
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,
 And to the fierce contention brought along
 Innumerable force of spirits armed,
 That durst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,
 His utmost power with adverse power opposed
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,
 And shook his throne. What though the field be lost?
 All is not lost: the unconquerable will,
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,
 And courage never to submit or yield:
 And what is else not to be overcome?
 That glory never shall his wrath or might

¹ From the first book of *Paradise Lost*.

Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power
 Who, from the terror of this arm, so late
 Doubted his empire—that were low indeed;
 That were an ignominy and shame beneath
 This downfall; since by fate the strength of gods
 And this empyreal substance cannot fail;
 Since, through experience of this great event,
 In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,
 We may with more successful hope resolve
 To wage by force or guile eternal war,
 Irreconcilable to our grand foe,
 Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.”

So spake the apostate angel, though in pain,
 Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair;
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:

“O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd powers,
 That led the imbattled seraphim to war
 Under thy conduct, and, in dreadful deeds
 Fearless, endangered Heaven’s perpetual King,
 And put to proof his high supremacy,
 Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate!
 Too well I see and rue the dire event
 That with sad overthrow and foul defeat
 Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host
 In horrible destruction laid thus low,
 As far as gods and heavenly essences
 Can perish: for the mind and spirit remains
 Invincible, and vigor soon returns,
 Though all our glory extinct, and happy state,
 Here swallowed up in endless misery.
 But what if he our Conqueror (whom I now

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Of force believe almighty, since no less
Than such could have o'erpowered such force as ours)
Have left us this our spirit and strength entire,
Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
That we may so suffice his vengeful ire;
Or do him mightier service, as his thralls
By right of war, whate'er his business be—
Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire,
Or do his errands in the gloomy deep?
What can it then avail, though yet we feel
Strength undiminished, or eternal being
To undergo eternal punishment?"

Whereto with speedy words the Arch-Fiend replied:
"Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labor must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;
Which ofttimes may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destined aim.
But see! the angry Victor hath recalled
His ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the gates of Heaven; the sulphurous hail,
Shot after us in storm, o'erblown hath laid
The fiery surge that from the precipice
Of Heaven received us falling; and the thunder,
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps hath spent his shafts, and ceases now
To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Let us not slip the occasion, whether scorn
Or satiate fury yield it from our foe.
Seest thou yon dreary plain, forlorn and wild,
The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimmering of those livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend
From off the tossing of these fiery waves;
There rest, if any rest can harbor there;
And, reassembling our afflicted powers,
Consult how we may henceforth most offend
Our enemy, our own loss how repair,
How overcome this dire calamity,
What reinforcement we may gain from hope,
If not, what resolution from despair."

*Satan and Beëlzebub rise from the lake and fly
to the land.*

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
Said then the lost archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heaven? this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: farthest from him is best,
Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy forever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessor, one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least

We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

John Milton

46 AN INVOCATION TO LIGHT¹

HAIL, holy Light, offspring of Heaven, first-born,
Or of the Eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblamed? since God is light,
And never but in unapproachèd light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,
Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
Escaped the Stygian pool, though long detained
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight,
Through utter and through middle darkness borne,
With other notes than to the Orphean lyre,
I sung of Chaos and eternal night;
Taught by the heavenly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend,

¹ The beginning of the third book of *Paradise Lost*. The action of the poem, which in the preceding books has chiefly taken place in Hell, "the Stygian pool," with its "darkness visible," and in the black abyss between Hell and Heaven, is now transferred to regions of light. The theme leads the poet to reflect upon his blindness.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,
 And feel thy sovran vital lamp; but thou
 Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain
 To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
 So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,
 Or dim suffusion veiled. Yet not the more
 Cease I to wander, where the Muses haunt
 Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
 Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
 Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
 That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
 Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget
 Those other two equaled with me in fate,—
 So were I equaled with them in renown!—
 Blind Thamyras, and blind Mæonides,
 And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old:¹
 Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
 Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid
 Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year
 Seasons return; but not to me returns
 Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
 But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
 Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
 Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair
 Presented with a universal blank
 Of Nature's works to me expunged and rased,
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
 So much the rather thou, celestial Light,

¹ Mæonides is Homer. Thamyras, a Thracian poet, and also Tiresias and Phineus, both blind soothsayers or "prophets," belong to the mythical history of Greece.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate; there plant eyes; all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

John Milton

47

AN IDYLL¹

The place is the Garden of Eden.

NOW came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleased: now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires: Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Eve addresses Adam.

“With thee conversing I forget all time;
All seasons, and their change, all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glistening with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful evening mild; then silent night,

¹ From the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*.

NARRATIVE AND DRAMATIC POEMS

With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,
And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train:
But neither breath of morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistering with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
Nor grateful evening mild; nor silent night,
With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,
Or glittering starlight, without thee is sweet."

John Milton

II

POETICAL DRAMA

*The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from
earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's
pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy
nothing
A local habitation and a name.*

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

48 THE MEETING OF ELECTRA AND ORESTES¹

AGAMEMNON, on his return from Troy, was murdered in the palace of Mycenæ by his wife Clytemnestra and her paramour Ægisthus. Orestes, the victim's son and heir, then a child, was saved by his sister Electra. She gave him to a faithful retainer, who carried him to Phocis. There he grew up in the home of Strophius, King of Crisa near Delphi, the father of his friend Pylades.

Many years have passed since then. Electra has perforce continued to live under the same roof with the murderers. While her sisters, Chrysothemis and Iphianassa, have been taught by prudence to hide their feelings, she has made no concealment of her loyalty to her father's memory, or of her inconsolable grief. Every kind of hardship and of insult is her portion at the hands of her mother and the dastardly Ægisthus; no slave could fare worse than she does in the house that was her father's.

One hope alone has hitherto borne her up—that the brother from whom she parted so long ago would be sent back by the gods as an avenger. But this, too, has failed her. An old man—a messenger, he says, from Phanoteus the Phocian, a great ally of Ægisthus—has just arrived at the palace with news of Orestes' death. Men of Phocis, he says, are even now bearing to the fatherland the ashes of the noble youth. Electra, sorrowing but undismayed, boldly resolves, Chrysothemis refusing help, to become, herself alone, the instrument of divine vengeance.

The news, however, is false. The old man is not a messenger from Phanoteus, but the loyal servant to whose care Electra entrusted her father's child. He

¹ From the tragedy of *Electra*. The translation is by Lewis Campbell, and is reprinted with the permission of the Oxford University Press. The exposition of events preceding the scene reprinted is adapted—with the permission of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press—from the note prefixed by Richard Jebb, in *The Tragedies of Sophocles*, to his prose version of the play.

POETICAL DRAMA

has returned to Mycenæ as the guide and companion of Orestes and Pylades, and as their supporter in the terrible deeds they must soon perform. While he has been deceiving Clytemnestra with feigned events, the youths have crowned with offerings the tomb of Agamemnon. They now approach the palace, bearing in their hands an urn of bronze. The first words are addressed by Orestes to the Chorus of maidens, and, though he does not recognize her as his sister, to Electra.

Or. Say, dames and damsels, have we heard aright,
And speed we to the goal of our desire?

Ch. And what desire or quest hath brought thee hither?

Or. I seek Ægisthus' dwelling all this while.

Ch. Welcome. The tongue that told thee hath no blame.

Or. Which of you all will signify within
Our joint arrival,—not unwelcome here?

Ch. This maiden, if the nearest should report.

Or. Mistress, wilt thou go yonder and make known,
That certain Phocians on Ægisthus wait?

El. Oh! can it be that you are come to bring
Clear proofs of the sad rumor we have heard?

Or. I know not what ye have heard. Old Strophius
Charged me with tidings of Orestes' fate.

El. What, stranger? How this terror steals on me!

Or. Bearing scant remnants of his body dead
In this small vase thou seest, we bring him home.

El. O sorrow! thou art here: I see full well
That burden of my heart in present view.

Or. If thou have tears for aught Orestes suffered,
Know that he lies within this vessel's room.

El. Ah, sir! by all in Heaven, if yonder urn
Hide him, ah! give it once into my hand,

POETICAL DRAMA

That o'er that dust I may lament and mourn
Myself and mine own house and all our woe!

Or. Bring it and give her, whosoe'er she be.
For not an enemy—this petition shows it—
But of his friends or kindred, is this maid.

[*The urn is given into Electra's hands.*]

El. O monument of him whom o'er all else
I loved! sole relic of Orestes' life,
How cold in this thy welcome is the hope
Wherein I decked thee as I sent thee forth!
Then bright was thy departure, whom I now
Bear lightly, a mere nothing, in my hands.
Would I had gone from life, ere I dispatched
Thee from my arms that saved thee to a land
Of strangers, stealing thee from death! For then
Thou hadst been quiet on that far-off day,
And had thy portion in our father's tomb.
Now thou hast perished in the stranger land
Far from thy sister, lorn and comfortless.
And I, O wretchedness! neither have bathed
And laid thee forth, nor from the blazing fire
Collected the sad burden, as was meet:
But thou, when foreign hands have tended thee,
Com'st a small handful in a narrow shell.
Woe for the constant care I spent on thee
Of old all vainly, with sweet toil! For never
Wast thou thy mother's darling, nay, but mine,
And I of all the household most thy nurse,
While "sister, sister," was thy voice to me.
But now all this is vanished in one day,
Dying in thy death. Thou hast carried all away
As with a whirlwind, and art gone. No more
My father lives: thyself art lost in death:

POETICAL DRAMA

I am dead, who lived in thee. Our enemies
Laugh loudly, and she maddens in her joy,
Our mother most unmotherly, of whom
Thy secret missives oftentimes told me, thou
Wouldst be the punisher. But that fair hope
The hapless Genius of thy lot and mine
Hath reft away, and gives thee thus to me,—
For thy loved form thy dust and fruitless shade.
O bitterness! O piteous sight! Woe! Woe!
Oh! sent on thy dire journey, dearest one,
How thou hast ruined me! Thou hast indeed,
Dear brother! Then receive me to thyself,
Hide me in this thy covering, there to dwell,
Me who am nothing, with thy nothingness,
For ever! Yea, when thou wert here above,
I ever shared with thee in all, and now
I would not have thee shut me from thy tomb.
Oh! let me die and follow thee! the dead,
My mind assures me now, have no more pain.

Ch. Electra, think! Thou hadst a mortal sire,
And mortal was thy brother. Grieve not far.

Or. O me! What shall I speak, or which way turn
The desperate word? I cannot hold my tongue.

El. What pain o'ercomes thee? Wherefore speak'st thou
so?

Or. Can this be famed Electra I behold?

El. No other. In sad case, as you may see.

Or. Ah! deep indeed was this calamity!

El. Is't possible that thou shouldst grieve for me?

Or. O ruined form! abandoned to disgrace!

El. 'Tis me you mean, stranger, I feel it now.

Or. Woe's me! Untrimmed for bridal, hapless maid!

El. Why this fixed gaze, O stranger! that deep groan?

POETICAL DRAMA

Or. How all unknowing was I of mine ill!

El. What thing hath passed to make it known to thee?

Or. The sight of thee attired with boundless woe.

El. And yet thine eye sees little of my pain.

Or. Can aught be still more hateful to be seen?

El. I have my dwelling with the murderers—

Or. Of whom? What evil would thy words disclose?

El. Of him who gave me birth. I am their slave.

Or. Whose power compels thee to this sufferance?

El. One called my mother, most unmotherly.

Or. How? by main force, or by degrading shames?

El. By force and shames, and every kind of evil.

Or. And is there none to succor or prevent?

El. None. Him I had, you give me here in dust.

Or. How mine eye pities thee this while, poor maid!

El. Know now, none ever pitied me but you.

Or. None ever came whose heart like sorrow wrung.

El. Is't possible we have some kinsman here?

Or. I will tell it, if these women here be friendly.

El. They are. They may be trusted. Only speak.

Or. Let go yon vase, that thou may'st learn the whole.

El. Nay, by the Gods! be not so cruel, sir!

Or. Obey me and thou shalt not come to harm.

El. Ah, never rob me of what most I love!

Or. You must not hold it.

El. O me miserable

For thee, Orestes, if I lose thy tomb!

Or. Speak no rash word. Thou hast no right to mourn,

El. No right to mourn my brother who is gone?

Or. Such utterance belongs not to thy tongue.

El. Oh, am I thus dishonored of the dead?

Or. Far from dishonor. But this ne'er was thine.

El. Is't not Orestes' body that I bear?

POETICAL DRAMA

Or. Nay, but the idle dressing of a tale.
El. And where is his poor body's resting-place?
Or. Nowhere. Seek not the living with the dead.
El. My son, what saidst thou?
Or. Nought but what is true.
El. Doth he yet live?
Or. If I have life in me.
El. Art thou Orestes?
Or. Let my signet here,
That was our father's, tell thine eyes, I am.
El. O day of days!
Or. Time hath no happier hour.
El. Is it thy voice?
Or. Hearken not elsewhere.
El. Have my arms caught thee?
Or. Hold me so for aye!
El. O dearest women, Argives of my home!
Ye see Orestes, dead in craft, but now
By that same craft delivered and preserved.
Ch. We see, dear daughter, and the gladsome tear
Steals from our eye to greet the bright event.

Sophocles

49 MEDEA MEDITATES THE MURDER OF HER CHILDREN¹

*THE Colchian princess Medea, by her magic
arts, aids Jason, a Greek adventurer, to win
the Golden Fleece, and sails with him to Hellas.*

¹ From the *Medea*. The translation is by Gilbert Murray, and is reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Murray and with the Oxford University Press, American Branch.

POETICAL DRAMA

After some years, in order to mend his fortunes, Jason marries Creusa, the daughter of the King of Corinth. Medea, doomed to exile, plots vengeance on her husband. To Creusa she sends her two children bearing a poisoned robe and crown, ostensibly that they may beg to remain under the new bride's protection, but in reality that they may compass her destruction. Medea now seeks—her children being again with her—to steel her heart to murder them.

O children, children mine: and you have found
A land and home, where, leaving me discrowned
And desolate, forever you will stay,
Motherless children! And I go my way
To other lands, an exile, ere you bring
Your fruits home, ere I see you prospering
Or know your brides, or deck the bridal bed,
All flowers, and lift your torches overhead.

Oh, cursèd be mine own hard heart! 'Twas all
In vain, then, that I reared you up, so tall
And fair; in vain I bore you, and was torn
With those long pitiless pains, when you were born.
Ah, wondrous hopes my poor heart had in you,
How you would tend me in mine age, and do
The shroud about me with your own dear hands,
When I lay cold, blessèd in all the lands
That knew us. And that gentle thought is dead!
You go, and I live on, to eat the bread
Of long years, to myself most full of pain.
And never your dear eyes, never again,
Shall see your mother, far away being thrown
To other shapes of life. . . . My babes, my own,
Why gaze ye so?—What is it that ye see!—

POETICAL DRAMA

And laugh with that last laughter? . . . Woe is me,
What shall I do?

Women, my strength is gone,
Gone like a dream, since once I looked upon
Those shining faces I can do it not.
Good-by to all the thoughts that burned so hot
Aforetime! I will take and hide them far,
Far, from men's eyes. Why should I seek a war
So blind: by these babes' wounds to sting again
Their father's heart, and win myself a pain
Twice deeper? Never, never! I forget
Henceforward all I labored for.

And yet,
What is it with me? Would I be a thing
Mocked at, and leave mine enemies to sting
Unsmitten? It must be. O coward heart,
Even to harbor such soft words!—Depart
Out of my sight, ye twain. | *The children go in.*

And they whose eyes
Shall hold it sin to share my sacrifice,
On their heads be it! My hand shall swerve not now.

Ah, ah, thou Wrath within me! Do not thou,
Do not— . . . Down, down, thou tortured thing, and spare
My children! They will dwell with us, aye, there
Far off, and give thee peace.

Too late, too late!
By all Hell's living agonies of hate,
They shall not take my little ones alive
To make their mock with! Howsoe'er I strive,
The thing is doomed; it shall not escape now
From being. Aye, the crown is on the brow,
And the robe girt, and in the robe that high

POETICAL DRAMA

Queen dying.

I know all. Yet . . . seeing that I
Must go so long a journey, and these twain
A longer yet and darker, I would fain
Speak with them, ere I go.

[A handmaid brings the children out again.]

Come, children; stand
A little from me. There. Reach out your hand,
Your right hand—so—to mother: and good-by!

*[She has kept them hitherto at arm's-length:
but at the touch of their hands, her resolu-
tion breaks down, and she gathers them pas-
sionately into her arms.]*

Oh, darling hand! Oh, darling mouth, and eye,
And royal mien, and bright brave faces clear,
May you be blessèd, but not here! What here
Was yours, your father stole. . . . Ah God, the glow
Of cheek on cheek, the tender touch; and oh,
Sweet scent of childhood. . . . Go! Go! . . . Am I
blind? . . .

Mine eyes can see not, when I look to find
Their places. I am broken by the wings
Of evil. . . . Yea, I know to what bad things
I go, but louder than all thought doth cry
Anger, which maketh man's worst misery.

[She follows the children into the house.]

Euripides

50 SCENES FROM ROMEO AND JULIET

I

THE place is a banqueting hall in the house of the Capulets, in Verona, where a dance is going joyously forward. Although there is a deadly feud between the Capulets and the Montagues, Romeo, a young scion of the latter house, has been induced to join a group of gay companions, and is in attendance, masked. With "this night's revels" begins the tragic story of the play. The opening speech is addressed to a servingman. Romeo does not suspect that the lady about whom he inquires is Juliet, a daughter of the household, and a Capulet.

Rom. What lady is that, which doth enrich the hand
Of yonder knight?

Serv. I know not, sir.

Rom. O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

Romeo has made his way to Juliet, and now addresses her in lines which constitute the first quatrain of a Shakespearean sonnet. Succeeding speeches complete the sonnet.

POETICAL DRAMA

Rom. [*To Juliet.*] If I profane with my unworthiest hand

This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand

To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Jul. Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

Which mannerly devotion shows in this;

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,

And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Rom. Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

Jul. Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

Rom. O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;

They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Jul. Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

Rom. Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take.

Thus from my lips, by yours, my sin is purged.

Jul. Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

Rom. Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!

Give me my sin again.

Jul.

You kiss by the book.

The conversation is here interrupted, but the two are already lovers, and before many moments have passed each has learned, with dismay, the identity of the other.

II

The place is Capulet's orchard, a garden. The dance is over. Romeo has escaped his companions, and in the hope of seeing Juliet has leapt the orchard wall. The first line he speaks is a comment upon the satirical sallies of the wittiest of his fellow-maskers, Mercutio, who has been loudly calling after him, but in vain.

POETICAL DRAMA

Rom. He jests at scars that never felt a wound.

[*Juliet appears above at a window.*]

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,

Who is already sick and pale with grief,

That thou her maid art far more fair than she:

Be not her maid, since she is envious;

Her vestal livery is but sick and green

And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

It is my lady, O, it is my love!

O, that she knew she were!

She speaks, yet she says nothing: what of that?

Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,

Having some business, do entreat her eyes

To twinkle in their spheres till they return.

What if her eyes were there, they in her head?

The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,

As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven

Would through the airy region stream so bright

That birds would sing and think it were not night.

See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!

O, that I were a glove upon that hand,

That I might touch that cheek!

Jul.

Ay me!

Rom.

She speaks:

O, speak again, bright angel! for thou art

As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,

As is a winged messenger of heaven

Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes

Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him,

When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds

POETICAL DRAMA

And sails upon the bosom of the air.

Jul. O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Rom. [*Aside.*] Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

Jul. 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague:
What's Montague? it is not hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

Rom. I take thee at thy word:
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

Jul. What man art thou that thus bescreened in night
So stumblest on my counsel?

Rom. By a name
I know not how to tell thee who I am:
My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee;
Had I it written, I would tear the word.

Jul. My ears have not yet drunk a hundred words
Of that tongue's utterance, yet I know the sound:
Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?

Rom. Neither, fair saint, if either thee dislike.

Jul. How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?

Owes: *owns*

POETICAL DRAMA

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who thou art,
If any of my kinsmen find thee here.

Rom. With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.

Jul. If they do see thee, they will murder thee.

Rom. Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
'Than twenty of their swords: look thou but sweet,
And I am proof against their enmity.

Jul. I would not for the world they saw thee here.

Rom. I have night's cloak to hide me from their sight;
And but thou love me, let them find me here:
My life were better ended by their hate,
Than death prorogued, wanting of thy love.

Jul. By whose direction found'st thou out this place?

Rom. By love, who first did prompt me to inquire;
He lent me counsel and I lent him eyes.
I am no pilot; yet, wert thou as far
As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise.

Jul. Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face;
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak to-night.
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke: but farewell compliment!
Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say "Ay,"
And I will take thy word: yet, if thou swear'st
Thou mayst prove false; at lovers' perjuries,
They say, Jove laughs. O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully:
Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won,

Compliment: *formality*

POETICAL DRAMA

I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond,
And therefore thou mayst think my 'havior light:
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.
I should have been more strange, I must confess,
But that thou overheard'st, ere I was ware,
My true love's passion: therefore pardon me,
And not impute this yielding to light love,
Which the dark night hath so discovered.

Rom. Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear,
That tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops—

Jul. O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

Rom. What shall I swear by?

Jul. Do not swear at all;
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
Which is the god of my idolatry,
And I'll believe thee.

Rom. If my heart's dear love—

Jul. Well, do not swear: although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say "It lightens." Sweet, good night!
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
Good night, good night! as sweet repose and rest
Come to thy heart as that within my breast!

Rom. O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

Jul. What satisfaction canst thou have to-night?

Strange: *shy, reserved*

POETICAL DRAMA

Rom. The exchange of thy love's faithful vow for mine.

Jul. I gave thee mine before thou didst request it:
And yet I would it were to give again.

Rom. Wouldst thou withdraw it? for what purpose, love?

Jul. But to be frank, and give it thee again.
And yet I wish but for the thing I have:
My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.

[*Nurse calls within.*

I hear some noise within; dear love, adieu!
Anon, good nurse! Sweet Montague, be true.
Stay but a little, I will come again. [*Exit, above.*

Rom. O blessed, blessed night! I am afeard,
Being in night, all this is but a dream,
Too flattering-sweet to be substantial.

Re-enter Juliet, above.

Jul. Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
If that thy bent of love be honorable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-morrow,
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite;
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay
And follow thee my lord throughout the world.

Nurse. [*Within.*] Madam!

Jul. I come, anon.—But if thou mean'st not well,
I do beseech thee—

Nurse. [*Within.*] Madam!

Jul. By and by, I come:—
To cease thy suit, and leave me to my grief:
To-morrow will I send.

Frank: *generous*

POETICAL DRAMA

Rom. So thrive my soul—

Jul. A thousand times good night! [Exit above.

Rom. A thousand times the worse, to want thy light.
Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books,
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks.
[Retiring.

Re-enter Juliet, above.

Jul. Hist! Romeo, hist! O, for a falconer's voice,
To lure this tassel-gentle back again!
Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud;
Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,
With repetition of my Romeo's name.

Rom. It is my soul that calls upon my name:
How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night,
Like softest music to attending ears!

Jul. Romeo!

Rom. My dear?

Jul. At what o'clock to-morrow
Shall I send to thee?

Rom. At the hour of nine.

Jul. I will not fail: 'tis twenty years till then.
I have forgot why I did call thee back.

Rom. Let me stand here till thou remember it.

Jul. I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,
Remembering how I love thy company.

Rom. And I'll still stay, to have thee still forget,
Forgetting any other home but this.

Jul. 'Tis almost morning; I would have thee gone:
And yet no further than a wanton's bird;
Who lets it hop a little from her hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,

POETICAL DRAMA

And with a silk thread plucks it back again,
So loving-jealous of his liberty.

Rom. I would I were thy bird.

Jul. Sweet, so would I:
Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing.
Good night, good night! parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I shall say good night till it be morrow.

[*Exit above.*]

Rom. Sleep dwell upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast!
Would I were sleep and peace, so sweet to rest!

III

Much has happened in the brief interval since the preceding scene. With the connivance and aid of the Nurse the lovers have been secretly married in Friar Laurence's cell; a street fight has taken place in which Tybalt, a cousin of Juliet's, has killed Mercutio, and then been killed in his turn by Romeo; Romeo has in consequence been doomed to banishment, or, if daybreak finds him in Verona, to death. The place is again Capulet's orchard. Romeo has come "to take his last farewell" of Juliet, and is now about to depart for Mantua. The two are seen together at the window of Juliet's chamber.

Jul. Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-tree:
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

Rom. It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day

POETICAL DRAMA

Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Jul. Yon light is not daylight, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to Mantua:
Therefore stay yet; thou need'st not be gone.

Rom. Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon gray is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads:
I have more care to stay than will to go:
Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so.
How is't, my soul? let's talk; it is not day.

Jul. It is, it is: hie hence, be gone, away!
It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.
Some say the lark makes sweet division;
This doth not so, for she divideth us:
Some say the lark and loathed toad change eyes;
O, now I would they had changed voices too!
Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,
Hunting thee hence with hunt's-up to the day.
O, now be gone; more light and light it grows.

Rom. More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!

Enter Nurse, to the chamber.

Nurse. Madam!

Jul. Nurse?

Division: *music*

Hunt's-up: "*the hunt is up*"—a song to awaken the huntsmen

POETICAL DRAMA

Nurse. Your lady mother is coming to your chamber:
The day is broke; be wary, look about. [*Exit.*

Jul. Then, window, let day in, and let life out.

Rom. Farewell, farewell! one kiss, and I'll descend.
[*He goeth down.*

Jul. Art thou gone so? love, lord, ay, husband, friend!
I must hear from thee every day in the hour,
For in a minute there are many days:
O, by this count I shall be much in years
Ere I again behold my Romeo!

Rom. Farewell!
I will omit no opportunity
That may convey my greetings, love, to thee.

Jul. O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?

Rom. I doubt it not; and all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.

Jul. O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb:
Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.

Rom. And trust me, love, in my eye so do you:
Dry sorrow drinks our blood. Adieu, adieu!

[*Exit.*

IV

The place is now a churchyard, before a tomb belonging to the Capulets. The misgivings expressed by Juliet in the preceding scene are about to be justified. In order to escape a forced marriage with a young nobleman named Paris, Juliet has entered into a scheme proposed by Friar Laurence. She has drunk a potion whose effect is to make her appear for the time as if dead, and has been buried in the

POETICAL DRAMA

family vault beside the body of Tybalt, where she is now lying, still asleep. It was planned that when the time for her waking arrived the Friar should come, with Romeo, and rescue her from the tomb. Romeo, meanwhile, has been told that she is dead, and by mischance hearing nothing of the Friar's plan has come to her tomb resolved to kill himself with poison. Here he has encountered Paris, who came to mourn for Juliet, and Romeo, being forced to fight, has killed his rival. Paris, dying, has asked Romeo to bury him in the tomb with Juliet. Romeo consents, as is indicated in the first line of the passage, in which he addresses the corpse of Paris.

I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave;
A grave? O, no! a lantern, slaughtered youth,
For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light.
Death, lie thou there, by a dead man interred.

[Laying Paris in the tomb.]

How oft when men are at the point of death
Have they been merry! which their keepers call
A lightning before death: O, how may I
Call this a lightning? O my love! my wife!
Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:
Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.
Tybalt, liest thou there in thy bloody sheet?
O, what more favor can I do to thee,
Than with that hand that cut thy youth in twain
To sunder his that was thine enemy?

Lantern: a windowed tower

POETICAL DRAMA

Forgive me, cousin! Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair? shall I believe
'That unsubstantial death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
For fear of that, I still will stay with thee:
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again: here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chambermaids; O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death!
Come, bitter conduct, come, unsavory guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy seasick weary bark!
Here's to my love! [*Drinks.*] Oh true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

[*Dies.*]

Friar Laurence, learning that the letter in which he explained his plan to Romeo has miscarried, comes alone to the churchyard. As he now approaches the tomb, his fears already aroused, he sees signs of the recent combat.

Fri. L.

Romeo!

[*Advances.*]

Alack, alack, what blood is this, which stains
'The stony entrance of this sepulcher?
What mean these masterless and gory swords

POETICAL DRAMA

To lie discolored by this place of peace?

[Enters the tomb.]

Romeo! O, pale! Who else? what, Paris too?

And steeped in blood? Ah, what an unkind hour

Is guilty of this lamentable chance!

The lady stirs.

[Juliet wakes.]

Jul. O comfortable friar! where is my lord?

I do remember well where I should be,

And there I am. Where is my Romeo?

[Noise within.]

Fri. L. I hear some noise. Lady, come from that nest
Of death, contagion, and unnatural sleep:

A greater power than we can contradict

Hath thwarted our intents. Come, come away.

Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead;

And Paris too. Come, I'll dispose of thee

Among a sisterhood of holy nuns:

Stay not to question, for the watch is coming;

Come, go, good Juliet *[Noise again]*, I dare no longer stay.

Jul. Go, get thee hence, for I will not away.

[Exit Fri. L.]

What's here? a cup, closed in my true love's hand?

Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end:

O churl! drunk all, and left no friendly drop

To help me after? I will kiss thy lips;

Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,

To make me die with a restorative.

[Kisses him.]

Thy lips are warm.

First Watch. *[Within.]* Lead, boy: which way?

Jul. Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!

[Snatching Romeo's dagger.]

This is thy sheath *[Stabs herself]*; there rust, and let me die.

[Falls on Romeo's body, and dies.]

William Shakespeare

51 SCENES FROM HENRY IV, PART I

I

HENRY, surnamed Bolingbroke, obtained the crown and became King Henry IV of England by deposing King Richard II. This he accomplished through the aid of the powerful family of the Percys, three members of which are now before us: the brothers Northumberland and Worcester, and Northumberland's son Hotspur, one of the dominant figures of the play. Of late the peace of the realm has again been broken. The Scotch Earl of Douglas has invaded England in the north, and Owen Glendower has headed an uprising in the west. Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, a brother of Hotspur's wife, and rightful heir to the crown, has opposed Glendower, but unsuccessfully. His army has been defeated and he himself has been taken prisoner. Hotspur, on the other hand, has been victorious over the Scotch in the battle of Holmedon. The occasion of the conference now about to begin was the refusal of Hotspur to turn over his Scotch prisoners to the King. The King has sent for him, and in his palace in London opens the scene with complaint of the treatment he has received.

The deposed King Richard the Second was put to death with the connivance of the usurping Bolingbroke. Of the Prince of Wales, concerning whom Hotspur speaks so contemptuously, more will be heard in subsequent scenes.

The stage direction reads: "Enter the King, Northumberland, Worcester, Hotspur, Sir Walter Blunt, with others."

King. My blood hath been too cold and temperate,
Unapt to stir at these indignities,
And you have found me; for accordingly

POETICAL DRAMA

You tread upon my patience: but be sure
I will from henceforth rather be myself,
Mighty and to be feared, than my condition;
Which hath been smooth as oil, soft as young down,
And therefore lost that title of respect
Which the proud soul ne'er pays but to the proud.

Wor. Our house, my sovereign liege, little deserves
The scourge of greatness to be used on it;
And that same greatness too which our own hands
Have help to make so portly.

North. My lord,—

King. Worcester, get thee gone; for I do see
Danger and disobedience in thine eye:
O, sir, your presence is too bold and peremptory,
And majesty might never yet endure
The moody frontier of a servant brow.
You have good leave to leave us: when we need
Your use and counsel, we shall send for you.

[Exit Wor.]

| *To North.*

You were about to speak.

North. Yea, my good lord.
Those prisoners in your highness' name demanded,
Which Harry Percy here at Holmedon took,
Were, as he says, not with such strength denied
As is delivered to your majesty:
Either envy, therefore, or misprision
Is guilty of this fault and not my son.

Hot. My liege, I did deny no prisoners.
But I remember, when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,
Breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword,

Condition: *private disposition*
 Holp: *helped*

Misprision: *misunderstanding*

POETICAL DRAMA

Came there a certain lord, neat, and trimly dressed,
 Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin new reaped
 Showed like a stubble-land at harvest-home;
 He was perfumed like a milliner;
 And twixt his finger and his thumb he held
 A pouncet-box, which ever and anon
 He gave his nose and took't away again;
 Who therewith angry, when it next came there,
 Took it in snuff; and still he smiled and talked,
 And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
 He called them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
 To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse
 Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
 With many holiday and lady terms
 He questioned me; amongst the rest, demanded
 My prisoners in your majesty's behalf.
 I then, all smarting with my wounds being cold,
 To be so pestered with a popinjay,
 Out of my grief and my impatience,
 Answered neglectingly I know not what,
 He should, or he should not; for he made me mad
 To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet
 And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman
 Of guns and drums and wounds,—God save the mark!—
 And telling me the sovereign'st thing on earth
 Was parmaceti for an inward bruise;
 And that it was great pity, so it was,
 This villainous saltpeter should be digged
 Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,
 Which many a good tall fellow had destroyed
 So cowardly; and but for these vile guns,
 He would himself have been a soldier.

Grief: *pain*

Pouncet-box: *perfume-box*

POETICAL DRAMA

This bald unjointed chat of his, my lord,
I answered indirectly, as I said;
And I beseech you, let not his report
Come current for an accusation
Betwixt my love and your high majesty.

Blunt. The circumstance considered, good my lord,
Whate'er Lord Harry Percy then had said
To such a person and in such a place,
At such a time, with all the rest retold,
May reasonably die and never rise
To do him wrong or any way impeach
What then he said, so he unsay it now.

King. Why, yet he doth deny his prisoners,
But with proviso and exception,
That we at our own charge shall ransom straight
His brother-in-law, the foolish Mortimer;
Who, on my soul, hath willfully betrayed
The lives of those that he did lead to fight
Against that great magician, damned Glendower,
Whose daughter, as we hear, the Earl of March
Hath lately married. Shall our coffers, then,
Be emptied to redeem a traitor home?
Shall we buy treason? and indent with fears,
When they have lost and forfeited themselves?
No, on the barren mountains let him starve;
For I shall never hold that man my friend
Whose tongue shall ask me for one penny cost
To ransom home revolted Mortimer.

Hot. Revolted Mortimer!
He never did fall off, my sovereign liege,
But by the chance of war: to prove that true
Needs no more but one tongue for all those wounds,

Indent: *bargain*

POETICAL DRAMA

Those mouthed wounds, which valiantly he took,
When on the gentle Severn's sedgy bank,
In single opposition, hand to hand,
He did confound the best part of an hour
In changing hardiment with great Glendower:
Three times they breathed and three times did they drink,
Upon agreement, of swift Severn's flood;
Who then, affrighted with their bloody looks,
Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
And hid his crisp head in the hollow bank
Bloodstained with these valiant combatants.
Never did base and rotten policy
Color her working with such deadly wounds;
Nor never could the noble Mortimer
Receive so many, and all willingly:
Then let not him be slandered with revolt.

King. Thou dost belie him, Percy, thou dost belie him;
He never did encounter with Glendower:
I tell thee,
He durst as well have met the devil alone
As Owen Glendower for an enemy.
Art thou not ashamed? But, sirrah, henceforth
Let me not hear you speak of Mortimer:
Send me your prisoners with the speediest means,
Or you shall hear in such a kind from me
As will displease you. My Lord Northumberland,
We license your departure with your son.
Send us your prisoners, or you will hear of it.

[Exeunt King Henry, Blunt, and train.]

Hot. An if the devil come and roar for them,
I will not send them: I will after straight
And tell him so; for I will ease my heart,
Albeit I make a hazard of my head.

Hardiment: *valorous deeds*

POETICAL DRAMA

North. What, drunk with choler? stay and pause awhile:
Here comes your uncle.

Re-enter Worcester.

Hot. Speak of Mortimer!
'Zounds, I will speak of him; and let my soul
Want mercy, if I do not join with him:
Yea, on his part I'll empty all these veins,
And shed my dear blood drop by drop in the dust,
But I will lift the down-trod Mortimer
As high in the air as this unthankful king,
As this ingrate and cankered Bolingbroke.

North. Brother, the king hath made your nephew mad.

Wor. Who struck this heat up after I was gone?

Hot. He will, forsooth, have all my prisoners;
And when I urged the ransom once again
Of my wife's brother, then his cheek looked pale,
And on my face he turned an eye of death,
Trembling even at the name of Mortimer.

Wor. I cannot blame him: was not he proclaimed
By Richard that dead is the next of blood?

North. He was; I heard the proclamation:
And then it was when the unhappy king,—
Whose wrongs in us God pardon!—did set forth
Upon his Irish expedition;
From whence he intercepted did return
To be deposed and shortly murdered.

Wor. And for whose death we in the world's wide mouth
Live scandalized and foully spoken of.

Hot. But, soft, I pray you; did King Richard then
Proclaim my brother Edmund Mortimer
Heir to the crown?

Cankered: corrupt, infected with evil

POETICAL DRAMA

North.

He did; myself did hear it.

Hot. Nay, then I cannot blame his cousin king,
That wished him on the barren mountains starve.
But shall it be, that you, that set the crown
Upon the head of this forgetful man
And for his sake wear the detested blot
Of murderous subornation, shall it be,
That you a world of curses undergo,
Being the agents, or base second means,
The cords, the ladder, or the hangman rather?
O, pardon me that I descend so low,
To show the line and the predicament
Wherein you range under this subtle king;
Shall it for shame be spoken in these days,
Or fill up chronicles in time to come,
That men of your nobility and power
Did gage them both in an unjust behalf,
As both of you—God pardon it!—have done,
To put down Richard, that sweet lovely rose,
And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke?
And shall it in more shame be further spoken,
That you are fooled, discarded and shook off
By him for whom these shames ye underwent?
No; yet time serves wherein you may redeem
Your banished honors and restore yourselves
Into the good thoughts of the world again,
Revenge the jeering and disdained contempt
Of this proud king, who studies day and night
To answer all the debt he owes to you
Even with the bloody payment of your deaths:
Therefore, I say,—

Wor.

Peace, cousin, say no more:

And now I will unclasp a secret book,

Canker: *worthless rose*

POETICAL DRAMA

And to your quick-conceiving discontents
I'll read you matter deep and dangerous,
As full of peril and adventurous spirit
As to o'er-walk a current roaring loud
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear.

Hot. If he fall in, good night! or sink or swim:
Send danger from the east unto the west,
So honor cross it from the north to south,
And let them grapple: O, the blood more stirs
To rouse a lion than to start a hare!

North. Imagination of some great exploit
Drives him beyond the bounds of patience.

Hot. By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,
To pluck bright honor from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned honor by the locks;
So he that doth redeem her thence might wear
Without corrival all her dignities:
But out upon this half-faced fellowship!

Wor. He apprehends a world of figures here,
But not the form of what he should attend.
Good cousin, give me audience for a while.

Hot. I cry you mercy.

Wor. Those same noble Scots
That are your prisoners,—

Hot. I'll keep them all;
By God, he shall not have a Scot of them;
No, if a Scot would save his soul, he shall not:
I'll keep them, by this hand.

Wor. You start away
And lend no ear unto my purposes.
Those prisoners you shall keep.

Corrival: *rival*

POETICAL DRAMA

Hot. Nay, I will; that's flat!

He said he would not ransom Mortimer;
Forbad my tongue to speak of Mortimer;
But I will find him when he lies asleep,
And in his ear I'll holla "Mortimer!"

Nay,

I'll have a starling shall be taught to speak
Nothing but "Mortimer," and give it him,
To keep his anger still in motion.

Wor. Hear you, cousin; a word.

Hot. All studies here I solemnly defy,
Save how to gall and pinch this Bolingbroke:
And that same sword-and-buckler Prince of Wales,
But that I think his father loves him not
And would be glad he met with some mischance,
I would have him poisoned with a pot of ale.

Wor. Farewell, kinsman: I'll talk to you
When you are better tempered to attend.

North. Why, what a wasp-stung and impatient fool
Art thou to break into this woman's mood,
Tying thine ear to no tongue but thine own!

Hot. Why, look you, I am whipped and scourged with
rods,

Nettled and stung with pismires, when I hear
Of this vile politician, Bolingbroke.

In Richard's time,—what do you call the place?—
A plague upon it, it is in Gloucestershire;
'Twas where the madcap duke his uncle kept,
His uncle York; where I first bowed my knee
Unto this king of smiles, this Bolingbroke,—
'Sblood!—

When you and he came back from Ravenspurgh.

North. At Berkley castle.

Hot. You say true:

POETICAL DRAMA

Why, what a candy deal of courtesy
This fawning greyhound then did proffer me!
Look, "when his infant fortune came to age,"
And "gentle Harry Percy," and "kind cousin";
O, the devil take such cozeners! God forgive me!
Good uncle, tell your tale; I have done.

Wor. Nay, if you have not, to it again;
We will stay your leisure.

Hot. I have done, i' faith.

Wor. Then once more to your Scottish prisoners.
Deliver them up without their ransom straight,
And make the Douglas' son your only mean
For powers in Scotland; which, for divers reasons
Which I shall send you written, be assured,
Will easily be granted. You, my lord,
[*To Northumberland.*

Your son in Scotland being thus employed,
Shall secretly into the bosom creep
Of that same noble prelate, well beloved,
The archbishop.

Hot. Of York, is it not?

Wor. True; who bears hard
His brother's death at Bristol, the Lord Scroop.
I speak not this in estimation,
As what I think might be, but what I know
Is ruminated, plotted and set down,
And only stays but to behold the face
Of that occasion that shall bring it on.

Hot. I smell it: upon my life, it will do well.

North. Before the game is afoot, thou still let'st slip.

Hot. Why, it cannot choose but be a noble plot:
And then the power of Scotland and of York,
To join with Mortimer, ha?

Mean: *agent*

Powers: *troops*

POETICAL DRAMA

Wor. And so they shall.

Hot. In faith, it is exceedingly well aimed.

Wor. And 'tis no little reason bids us speed,
To save our heads by raising of a head;
For, bear ourselves as even as we can,
The king will always think him in our debt,
And think we think ourselves unsatisfied,
Till he hath found a time to pay us home:
And see already how he doth begin
To make us strangers to his looks of love.

Hot. He does, he does: we'll be revenged on him.

Wor. Cousin, farewell: no further go in this
Than I by letters shall direct your course.
When time is ripe, which will be suddenly,
I'll steal to Glendower and Lord Mortimer;
Where you and Douglas and our powers at once,
As I will fashion it, shall happily meet,
To bear our fortunes in our own strong arms,
Which now we hold at much uncertainty.

North. Farewell, good brother: we shall thrive, I trust.

Hot. Uncle, adieu: O, let the hours be short
Till fields and blows and groans applaud our sport! [*Exeunt.*

II

The Prince of Wales, known familiarly as Prince Hal, has greatly disappointed his father, King Henry IV, by his indifference to affairs of state, his lack of princely aloofness, and his notorious addiction to low company. The King, prompted by news of the Percy rebellion, has now summoned him to the palace for a conference. The Prince has obeyed the summons, and father and son are alone.

Head: army

POETICAL DRAMA

King Henry IV, when he started the rebellion that made him king, had been undergoing a sentence of banishment. The "skipping king" with so little sense of royal dignity is Richard II. The Percy whose glorious deeds are contrasted with Hal's unpromising behavior is Hotspur.

King. I know not whether God will have it so,
For some displeasing service I have done,
That, in his secret doom, out of my blood
He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me;
But thou dost in thy passages of life
Make me believe that thou art only marked
For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven
To punish my mistreadings. Tell me else,
Could such inordinate and low desires,
Such poor, such bare, such lewd, such mean attempts,
Such barren pleasures, rude society,
As thou art matched withal and grafted to,
Accompany the greatness of thy blood
And hold their level with thy princely heart?

Prince. So please your majesty, I would I could
Quit all offenses with as clear excuse
As well as I am doubtless I can purge
Myself of many I am charged withal:
Yet such extenuation let me beg,
As, in reproof of many tales devised,
Which oft the ear of greatness needs must hear,
By smiling pick-thanks and base newsmongers,
I may, for some things true, wherein my youth
Hath faulty wandered and irregular,
Find pardon on my true submission.

King. God pardon thee! yet let me wonder, Harry,

Pick-thanks: tale-bearing sycophants

POETICAL DRAMA

At thy affections, which do hold a wing
 Quite from the flight of all thy ancestors.
 Thy place in council thou hast rudely lost,
 Which by thy younger brother is supplied,
 And art almost an alien to the hearts
 Of all the court and princes of my blood:
 The hope and expectation of thy time
 Is ruined, and the soul of every man
 Prophetically doth forethink thy fall.
 Had I so lavish of my presence been,
 So common-hackneyed in the eyes of men,
 So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
 Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
 Had still kept loyal to possession
 And left me in reputeless banishment,
 A fellow of no mark nor likelihood.
 By being seldom seen, I could not stir
 But like a comet I was wondered at;
 That men would tell their children "This is he";
 Others would say "Where, which is Bolingbroke?"
 And then I stole all courtesy from Heaven,
 And dressed myself in such humility
 That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
 Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths,
 Even in the presence of the crowned king.
 Thus did I keep my person fresh and new;
 My presence, like a robe pontifical,
 Ne'er seen but wondered at: and so my state,
 Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast
 And won by rareness such solemnity.
 The skipping king, he ambled up and down
 With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits,
 Soon kindled and soon burnt; carded his state,

Bavin: *brushwood*

Carded: *diluted, debased*

POETICAL DRAMA

Mingled his royalty with capering fools,
Had his great name profaned with their scorns,
And gave his countenance, against his name,
To laugh at gibing boys and stand the push
Of every beardless vain comparative,
Grew a companion to the common streets,
Enfeoffed himself to popularity;
That, being daily swallowed by men's eyes,
They surfeited with honey and began
To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little
More than a little is by much too much.
So when he had occasion to be seen,
He was but as the cuckoo is in June,
Heard, not regarded; seen, but with such eyes
As, sick and blunted with community,
Afford no extraordinary gaze,
Such as is bent on sun-like majesty
When it shines seldom in admiring eyes;
But rather drowsed and hung their eyelids down,
Slept in his face and rendered such aspect
As cloudy men use to their adversaries,
Being with his presence glutted, gorged and full.
And in that very line, Harry, standest thou;
For thou hast lost thy princely privilege
With vile participation: not an eye
But is aweary of thy common sight,
Save mine, which hath desired to see thee more;
Which now doth that I would not have it do,
Make blind itself with foolish tenderness.

Prince. I shall hereafter, my thrice gracious lord,
Be more myself.

Community: *habitual experience*

Comparative: *dealer in comparisons*

Enfeoffed himself: *made himself a vassal*

Vile participation: *frequenting of low society*

POETICAL DRAMA

King.

For all the world

As thou art to this hour was Richard then
When I from France set foot at Ravenspurgh,
And even as I was then is Percy now.
Now, by my scepter and my soul to boot,
He hath more worthy interest to the state
Than thou the shadow of succession;
For of no right, nor color like to right,
He doth fill fields with harness in the realm,
Turns head against the lion's armed jaws,
And, being no more in debt to years than thou,
Leads ancient lords and reverend bishops on
To bloody-battles and to bruising arms.
What never-dying honor hath he got
Against renowned Douglas! whose high deeds,
Whose hot incursions and great name in arms
Holds from all soldiers chief majority
And military title capital
Through all the kingdoms that acknowledge Christ:
Thrice hath this Hotspur, Mars in swathing clothes,
This infant warrior, in his enterprises
Discomfited great Douglas, ta'en him once,
Enlarged him and made a friend of him,
To fill the mouth of deep defiance up
And shake the peace and safety of our throne.
And what say you to this? Percy, Northumberland,
The Archbishop's grace of York, Douglas, Mortimer,
Capitulate against us and are up.
But wherefore do I tell these news to thee?
Why, Harry, do I tell thee of my foes,
Which art my near'st and dearest enemy?

Capital: *highest*

Capitulate: *league themselves*

Enlarged: *freed*

Harness: *armed men*

Interest: *title*

Majority: *preëminence*

Succession: *hereditary claim*

Swathling: *swaddling*

POETICAL DRAMA

Thou that art like enough, through vassal fear,
Base inclination and the start of spleen,
To fight against me under Percy's pay,
To dog his heels and curtsy at his frowns,
To show how much thou art degenerate.

Prince. Do not think so; you shall not find it so:
And God forgive them that so much have swayed
Your majesty's good thoughts away from me!
I will redeem all this on Percy's head,
And in the closing of some glorious day
Be bold to tell you that I am your son;
When I will wear a garment all of blood
And stain my favors in a bloody mask,
Which, washed away, shall scour my shame with it:
And that shall be the day, whene'er it lights,
That this same child of honor and renown,
This gallant Hotspur, this all-praised knight,
And your unthought-of Harry chance to meet.
For every honor sitting on his helm,
Would they were multitudes, and on my head
My shames redoubled! for the time will come,
That I shall make this northern youth exchange
His glorious deeds for my indignities.
Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf;
And I will call him to so strict account,
That he shall render every glory up,
Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,
Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart.
'This, in the name of God, I promise here:
The which if He be pleased I shall perform,
I do beseech your majesty may salve
The long-grown wounds of my intemperance:

Engross: *heap*

Factor: *agent*

Favors: *features*

POETICAL DRAMA

If not, the end of life cancels all bands;
And I will die a hundred thousand deaths
Ere break the smallest parcel of this vow.

King. A hundred thousand rebels die in this:
Thou shalt have charge and sovereign trust herein.

III

The insurrection has come to a head, the hostile armies confront each other, and a parley is in progress between the King and two representatives of the rebels, Worcester and Vernon. The Prince of Wales, roused from his careless life and ready for action, now makes a gallant proposal.

Prince. In both your armies there is many a soul
Shall pay full dearly for this encounter,
If once they join in trial. [*To Worcester.*] Tell your
nephew,
The Prince of Wales doth join with all the world
In praise of Henry Percy: by my hopes,
This present enterprise set off his head,
I do not think a braver gentleman,
More active-valiant or more valiant-young,
More daring or more bold, is now alive
To grace this latter age with noble deeds.
For my part, I may speak it to my shame,
I have a truant been to chivalry;
And so I hear he doth account me too;
Yet this before my father's majesty—
I am content that he shall take the odds
Of his great name and estimation,
And will, to save the blood on either side,
Try fortune with him in a single fight.

Estimation: reputation

POETICAL DRAMA

The proposal is set aside by the King, and it is clear that nothing can come of it. Worcester and Vernon, however, having returned to the rebel camp, now proceed to tell Hotspur of the Prince's challenge. Harry Monmouth is, of course, the Prince.

Wor. The Prince of Wales stepped forth before the king,
And, nephew, challenged you to single fight.

Hot. O, would the quarrel lay upon our heads,
And that no man might draw short breath to-day
But I and Harry Monmouth! Tell me, tell me,
How showed his tasking? seemed it in contempt?

Ver. No, by my soul; I never in my life
Did hear a challenge urged more modestly,
Unless a brother should a brother dare
To gentle exercise and proof of arms.
He gave you all the duties of a man;
Trimmed up your praises with a princely tongue,
Spoke your deservings like a chronicle,
Making you ever better than his praise
By still dispraising praise valued with you;
And, which became him like a prince indeed,
He made a blushing cital of himself;
And chid his truant youth with such a grace
As if he mastered there a double spirit
Of teaching and of learning instantly.
There did he pause: but let me tell the world,
If he outlive the envy of this day,
England did never owe so sweet a hope,
So much misconstrued in his wantonness.

Hot. Cousin, I think thou art enamored
On his follies: never did I hear
Of any prince so wild a libertine.

Owe: *own*

Valued: *compared*

POETICAL DRAMA

But be he as he will, yet once ere night
I will embrace him with a soldier's arm,
That he shall shrink under my courtesy.

IV

The parley did not result in a laying down of arms, and battle has been going on for some time. At last the two Harrys meet face to face.

Hot. If I mistake not, thou art Harry Monmouth.

Prince. Thou speak'st as if I would deny my name.

Hot. My name is Harry Percy.

Prince. Why, then I see

A very valiant rebel of the name.

I am the Prince of Wales; and think not, Percy,

To share with me in glory any more:

Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere;

Nor can one England brook a double reign,

Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales.

Hot. Nor shall it, Harry; for the hour is come

To end the one of us; and would to God

Thy name in arms were now as great as mine!

Prince. I'll make it greater ere I part from thee;

And all the budding honors on thy crest

I'll crop to make a garland for my head.

Hot. I can no longer brook thy vanities.

They fight; Hotspur is wounded, and falls.

Hot. O, Harry, thou hast robbed me of my youth!

I better brook the loss of brittle life

Than those proud titles thou hast won of me;

They wound my thoughts worse than thy sword my flesh:

POETICAL DRAMA

But thought's the slave of life, and life time's fool;
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop. O, I could prophesy,
But that the earthy and cold hand of death
Lies on my tongue: no, Percy, thou art dust,
And food for— [Dies.

Prince. For worms, brave Percy: fare thee well, great
heart!

Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit,
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough: this earth that bears thee dead
Bears not alive so stout a gentleman.
If thou wert sensible of courtesy,
I should not make so dear a show of zeal:
But let my favors hide thy mangled face;
And, even in thy behalf, I'll thank myself
For doing these fair rites of tenderness.
Adieu, and take thy praise with thee to heaven!
Thy ignominy sleep with thee in the grave,
But not remembered in thy epitaph!

William Shakespeare

52

HAMLET AND THE QUEEN¹

SINCE the sudden death of the late King, Hamlet's father, strange events have come to pass in Denmark. The Queen, to the grief and amazement of her son, has married her husband's brother, Claudius; and the ghost of the dead King,

¹ From *Hamlet*.

POETICAL DRAMA

denouncing this same Claudius as his murderer and the seducer of his wife, has laid upon Hamlet the duty of revenge. This revenge the young prince has not yet taken, though he has assumed the guise of madness, perhaps to forward his designs, and has just caused a tumult in the court by public exposure of his uncle's guilt. The Queen has summoned him to her chamber in order to reprimand him for his conduct, and he now comes to her—though in a mood she little expects.

Polonius, the lord chamberlain, has been the Queen's messenger to Hamlet, and it is of Hamlet that he first speaks.

Pol. He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screened and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.

Ham. [*Within.*] Mother, mother, mother!

Queen. I'll warrant you,
Fear me not: withdraw, I hear him coming.

[Polonius hides behind the arras.]

Enter Hamlet.

Ham. Now, mother, what's the matter?

Queen. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Ham. Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Ham. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Queen. Why, how now, Hamlet!

Ham. What's the matter now?

Queen. Have you forgot me?

Ham. No, by the rood, not so;

Sconce: *hide*

POETICAL DRAMA

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

Queen. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

Ham. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not
budge;

You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

Queen. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!

Pol. [*Behind.*] What, ho! help, help, help!

Ham. [*Drawing.*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat,
dead! [*Makes a pass through the arras.*]

Pol. [*Behind.*] O, I am slain! [*Falls and dies.*]

Queen. O me, what hast thou done?

Ham. Nay, I know not:

Is it the king?

Queen. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Ham. A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen. As kill a king!

Ham. Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

[*Lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius.*]

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.

Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down,

And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,

If it be made of penetrable stuff,

If damned custom have not brassed it so

That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

Queen. What have I done, that thou dar'est wag thy
tongue

Sense: *feeling*

POETICAL DRAMA

In noise so rude against me?

Ham.

Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

Queen.

Ay me, what act,

That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

Ham. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband. Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age

Batten: *grow fat*

Contraction: *marriage contract*

Doom: *Judgment Day*

Index: *prefixed table of contents*

Solidity, etc.: *the earth*

Station: *attitude in standing*

POETICAL DRAMA

The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure that sense
Is apoplexed; for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserved some quality of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.

O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardor gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn
And reason panders will.

Queen. O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

Ham. Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty,—

Queen. O, speak to me no more;
These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

Ecstasy: *madness*
Enseamed: *loathsome*

Grained: *deep-dyed*
Hoodman-blind: *blind man's buff*

Tinct: *color*

POETICAL DRAMA

Ham. A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!

Queen. No more!

Ham. A king of shreds and patches,—

Enter Ghost.

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

Queen. Alas, he's mad!

Ham. Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!

Ghost. Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul:
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:
Speak to her, Hamlet.

Ham. How is it with you, lady?

Queen. Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
Start up, and stand an end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper

An: *on*
Conceit: *imagination*

Distemper: *malady, disorder*
Excrements: *hair*

Vice: *cloven*

POETICAL DRAMA

Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

Ham. On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. [*To the Ghost.*] Do not look
upon me;

Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true color; tears perchance for blood.

Queen. To whom do you speak this?

Ham. Do you see nothing there?

Queen. Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

Ham. Nor did you nothing hear?

Queen. No, nothing but ourselves.

Ham. Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he lived!
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

[*Exit Ghost.*]

Queen. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

Ham. Ecstasy!

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness
That I have uttered: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will reword; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;

Capable: *susceptible*

Effects: *intended actions*

POETICAL DRAMA

And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

Queen. O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence: the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either master the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be blessed,
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,

[*Pointing to Polonius.*]

I do repent: but Heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.

William Shakespeare

Curb: *bow*

Pursy: *fat, short-breathed*

THE speaker is King Henry IV, sick and despondent; the place, "Westminster. The Palace"; the time, past midnight.

How many thousand of my poorest subjects
 Are at this hour asleep!—O sleep! O gentle sleep!
 Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,
 That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
 And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
 Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
 Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
 And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
 Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
 Under the canopies of costly state,
 And lulled with sounds of sweetest melody?
 O thou dull god! why liest thou with the vile
 In loathsome beds, and leavest the kingly couch
 A watch-case, or a common 'larum-bell?
 Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
 Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
 And in the visitation of the winds,
 Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
 Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
 With deafening clamors in the slippery clouds,
 That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?
 Canst thou, O partial sleep! give thy repose
 To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude;
 And in the calmest and most stillest night,

¹ From *Henry IV, Part II*.

Cribs: *huts*

Watch-case: *sentry box*

POETICAL DRAMA

With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down!
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

William Shakespeare

54

IDEAL FRIENDSHIP¹

HAMLET, the young Prince of Denmark, on the brink of an event likely to mark a crisis in his tragic history, speaks out his admiration for his friend Horatio.

Ham. What ho! Horatio!

Enter Horatio.

Hor. Here, sweet lord, at your service.

Ham. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

Hor. O, my dear lord,—

Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath scaled thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards

¹ From *Hamlet*.

POETICAL DRAMA

Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.

William Shakespeare

55

ON KINGLY CEREMONY¹

I T is early dawn before the battle of Agincourt.
King Henry V, formerly Prince Hal, has been
mingling incognito with his soldiers. A speech that
he has just heard leads him to reflect concerning the
disadvantages of royal state.

What infinite heart's-ease
Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!
And what have kings, that privates have not too,
Save ceremony, save general ceremony?
And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshipers?
What are thy rents? what are thy comings in?
O ceremony, show me but thy worth!
What is thy soul of adoration?
Art thou aught else but place, degree, and form,
Creating awe and fear in other men?
Wherein thou art less happy being feared
Than they in fearing.

¹ From *Henry V*.

POETICAL DRAMA

What drink'st thou oft, instead of homage sweet,
But poisoned flattery? O, be sick, great greatness,
And bid thy ceremony give thee cure!
Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out
With titles blown from adulation?
Will it give place to flexure and low bending?
Canst thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee,
Command the health of it? No, thou proud dream,
That play'st so subtly with a king's repose;
I am a king that find thee, and I know
'Tis not the balm, the scepter and the ball,
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
The farced title running 'fore the king,
The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
That beats upon the high shore of this world,
No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,
Who with a body filled and vacant mind
Gets him to rest, crammed with distressful bread;
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell,
But, like a lackey, from the rise to set
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus and all night
Sleeps in Elysium; next day after dawn,
Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,
And follows so the ever-running year,
With profitable labor, to his grave:
And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,
Winding up days with toil and nights with sleep,
Had the forehand and vantage of a king.
The slave, a member of the country's peace,
Enjoys it; but in gross brain little wots

Balm: *ceremonial ointment*

POETICAL DRAMA

What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace,
Whose hours the peasant best advantages.

William Shakespeare

56

A KING'S REVERY¹

*K*ING Henry VI, alone on a field of battle,
muses.

This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light,
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day nor night.
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea
Forced by the tide to combat with the wind;
Now sways it that way, like the selfsame sea
Forced to retire by fury of the wind:
Sometime the flood prevails, and then the wind:
Now one the better, then another best;
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,
Yet neither conqueror nor conquered:
So is the equal poise of this fell war.
Here on this molehill will I sit me down.
To whom God will, there be the victory!
For Margaret my queen, and Clifford too,
Have chid me from the battle; swearing both
They prosper best of all when I am thence.
Would I were dead! if God's good will were so;
For what is in this world but grief and woe?
O God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain;

¹ From *Henry VI, Part III*. This passage and the greater part of the passage following are used by Walter Bagehot to exemplify Shakespeare's insight "into the musing life of man," the life which men "never exhibit consciously to others, and which only becomes predominant in secrecy and solitude and to themselves."

Advantages: *profits* ("hours" being the irregular subject)

POETICAL DRAMA

To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,
How many make the hour full complete;
How many hours bring about the day;
How many days will finish up the year;
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So many hours must I contemplate;
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will can;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece:
So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,
Passed over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah, what a life were this! how sweet! how lovely!
Gives not the hawthorn-bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?
O, yes, it doth; a thousand-fold it doth.
And to conclude, the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
Is far beyond a prince's delicates,
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couched in a curious bed,
When care, mistrust, and treason waits on him.

William Shakespeare

Ean: *bring forth their young*

Silly: *innocent*

IN PRAISE OF JESTERS

*J*AQUES, the melancholy philosopher of *As You Like It*, tells of a colloquy he has just had with the fool Touchstone.

A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
 A motley fool; a miserable world!
 As I do live by food, I met a fool;
 Who laid him down and basked him in the sun,
 And railed on Lady Fortune in good terms,
 In good set terms and yet a motley fool.
 "Good morrow, fool," quoth I. "No, sir," quoth he,
 "Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune":
 And then he drew a dial from his poke,
 And, looking on it with lack-luster eye,
 Says very wisely, "It is ten o'clock:
 Thus we may see," quoth he, "how the world wags:
 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
 And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;
 And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
 And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
 And thereby hangs a tale." When I did hear
 The motley fool thus moral on the time,
 My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
 That fools should be so deep-contemplative,
 And I did laugh sans intermission
 An hour by his dial. O noble fool!
 A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear.

William Shakespeare

Moral: *moralize*

THE STUFF OF DREAMS¹

PROSPERO, having dismissed a company of spirits which by his magic art he had raised up and caused to enact a pastoral scene, comments upon the vanished spectacle, and muses upon human life.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

William Shakespeare

THE PURITAN AND THE MAN
OF THE WORLD²

PHILINTE. Come, why so hot, Alceste?

Alceste.

Leave me, I say!

Ph. But why this groundless anger, tell me, pray?

Al. Leave me, sir, I repeat. Out of my sight!

Ph. Come, don't be angry. Listen! Is it right . . .

¹ From *The Tempest*.

² *Le Misanthrope*, Act I. From a forthcoming translation by William F. Giese. Copyright, 1926.

Inherit: *possess, inhabit*

Rack: *cloud*

POETICAL DRAMA

Al. I will be angry, and won't listen! Zounds!

Ph. Be calm, Alceste, and do not chafe your wounds.
Though I'm your friend,—I vow, this strange disease . . .

Al. You are my friend no longer, if you please!
The bond is snapped that held through many a year;
When in your soul such ugly blots appear
I tell you outright you and I must part:
I want no place in a corrupted heart.

Ph. What are these ugly blots on my fair fame?

Al. Go to, sir; you should die for very shame!
Heaven holds no pardon for such monstrous deeds,
And every honest heart that sees them bleeds!
You meet a random passer, you caress him
Straightway, you grasp him, clasp him, press him, bless him;
You bow and scrape, you flatter and cajole,
And swear you're his forever, heart and soul;
Yet, once he's gone, your hot zeal grows so tame,
Your love so cool, that if I ask his name,
You hem and haw—you really can't recall—
You've scarcely heard his name three times in all!
Just Heaven! It's base, it's vile, it's infamous,
To fawn, to lie, and to dissemble thus!
And if, unhappily, I'd done the same,
I'd go and hang myself to hide my shame.

Ph. Come, come! This is no hangable offense;
I read the statutes in a different sense;
And, spite the violence of your decrees,
I do not mean to hang yet, if you please.

Al. Who cannot reason answers with a gibe.

Ph. Who cannot reason lets his friends prescribe.

Al. Agreed! let men be true and play no part,
And let the lips be heralds to the heart.

Ph. What! if some friend embraces me with passion,
Shall I not pay him in the self-same fashion,

POETICAL DRAMA

Treat his advances as transcendent matters,
Praise when he praises, flatter when he flatters?

Al. No! I denounce this mercenary code
That 'mong your modish people is the mode;
There's naught I hate more than the vile grimaces
Of these same flatterers with their smiling faces,
Who always greet you with wide-outstretched arms,
Who find your thoughts all wise, your speech all charms,
And with strained courtesies that never cool
O'erwhelm alike the wise man and the fool.
What does it profit me to find a friend
Who swears faith, zeal, esteem, love without end,
And lauds my virtue with a tender touch,
If the first rogue may hear him say as much?
No honest soul, legitimately proud,
Will care for plaudits lavished on the crowd,
And finely tempered spirits stand averse
From praises shared by all the universe.
Esteem is founded upon preference:
A common love offends my common sense;
And since you share these vices of the age,
I give you up! It puts me in a rage
To see the vast indulgence of your heart
That gives to each and all an equal part.
I crave selection—on this note I end:
The friend of all mankind is not my friend.

Ph. But in a world by forms and fashions swayed
Fair words received are with fair words repaid.

Al. No—I repeat—my choler overflows
At this vile trafficking in hollow shows.
Let men lay bare their thoughts, and in all places
Proclaim their inmost feelings in their faces;
Let the heart speak, and let no lying mask
Distort the simple truth—that's all I ask.

POETICAL DRAMA

Ph. But there are some occasions when pure truth
May be offensive, mischievous, uncouth!
And now and then—rail as you will—we ought
With timely speech to veil untimely thought.
Would it be wise or decent, when we doubt
A friend's good faith, to blurt that feeling out?
If we dislike a man, or think him base,
Vile, loathsome, shall we say so—to his face?

Al. Yes!

Ph. What! And would you dare, full jump,
To tell old Emily that she's a frump—
And how her paint and powder scandalize?

Al. I would!

Ph. Or tell proud Dorilas it is not wise
To blazon his great blood, lest the whole court
Make him and all his ancestry their sport?

Al. I would!

Ph. You jest.

Al. I do not. 'Tis my plan
Upon this point to spare no mortal man.
My soul is sickened. All the world's a stage
Where every act augments my towering rage.
For what is seen in all this motley throng
Of wrangling actors but triumphant wrong
Lording it over right, and mad unreason
Flattered and fed by roguery and treason?
'Tis past enduring! And from this time forth
I'll tell each knave and fool his proper worth!

Ph. This frantic humor is too fierce by half,
And your wild outbursts only make me laugh.
Were friends by diverse tempers e'er so swayed?
We're like those brothers by Molière portrayed . . .

Al. I pray you, drop these stale similitudes.

Ph. And I beseech you, shun these savage moods.

POETICAL DRAMA

You cannot mend the world, whate'er you do,
And, since plain-speaking has such charms for you,
I'll plainly tell you that this crabbed spirit,
This railing at all forms that men inherit,
This bent to sourly moralize and mock,
Makes you of town and court the laughing-stock.

Al. By Heaven! I would not have it otherwise!
Such laughter is approval in disguise.
Let the world laugh! I laugh at it in turn,
I court its scorn, and its good will I spurn.

Ph. I crave selection. You condemn pell-mell.

Al. All! All! I hate them like the gates of hell.

Ph. What! All poor mortals, all, from best to worst,
Without one sole exception stand accursed?
Still there are some even in this sorry age . . .

Al. No, all are damned—mine is a general rage!
I hate all men; some for their scurvy ways,
And some because these scurvy rogues they praise,
And never feel those wrathful tempests roll
That vice should waken in a virtuous soul.
See with what ease the party to my suit,
Despite his crimes, keeps his usurped repute!
Through his false mask men see the rascal's face,
And his true self is known in every place.
His upturned eyes and his mellifluous speeches
Discredit all the virtues that he preaches.
All know the rogue's so conversant with evil
To gain his ends he'd bargain with the devil;
His courtiers love his titles, power, and pelf,
But where's the man who loves the wretch himself?
Call him a rogue, accuse, revile, convict,
All will agree, and none will contradict;
They know by what vile arts he made his way,
And all his vices are as plain as day;

POETICAL DRAMA

And yet this fellow's welcomed in all houses,
With town and court he hobnobs and carouses,
And every golden honor in the state
Becomes the booty of this reprobate.
By Heaven! I vow it cuts me to the quick
That vice should find us grown so politic;
Fie on this world! It fills me with such rage
I long to flee into a hermitage.

Ph. Come, come—let's not disparage poor mankind;
They are not all, nor wholly, mad and blind,
Nor are they wholly wicked. The true sage
Surveys them with an equitable rage,
And strives with lenience to conciliate
His high ideal with their mortal state.
His ripened wisdom is not exigent,
And asking much with little is content.
The time's grown mild; rigor is out of date,
We quote salvation at a cheaper rate;
We know the world; we know that men are men,
And that even women stumble—now and then.
In short, it is the acme of all folly
To wish to mend mankind. 'Tis melancholy
Daily to see a hundred horrid things
That might be heavenly—if men sprouted wings;
And yet, although I wish them otherwise,
I view them without anger or surprise;
I take them as they are; I cannot change them:
Then why with grumbling diatribes estrange them?
Nay, nay—all men of sense in court and town
Cry up my calm and cry your fury down.

Al. And would it hold—this calm—if you should find
Your friends turned traitors? or your foes combined
To filch your pockets, blast your reputation,
And paint yourself a scandal to the nation?

POETICAL DRAMA

Ph. Yes, truly; for these vices that misfeature
The limpid crystalline of human nature
Are nature's livery. Why should we grieve
If woman play us false, if man deceive?
Nature that bids the wolf devour the lamb,
That self-same nature made me what I am.
She fashioned man and beast. How slight the span
That severs monkey, vulture, wolf, from man!

Al. What! shall I see myself betrayed, robbed, bilked,
And stand here patient as a cow that's milked!
No more!—by Heaven! you argue like a fool.

Ph. I'll say no more. I beg you to keep cool,
To be by random feelings less distraught
And give your suit some portion of your thought.

Al. Think of my suit! I tell you I will not!

Ph. Come! who shall be the pleaders of your cause?

Al. My pleaders? Reason—justice—and the laws!

Ph. And don't you mean to grease their wheels a little?

Al. No! Is my case so weak? my right so brittle?

Ph. By no means; yet intrigue may turn the scale.

Al. I lean on justice: if it fails, I fail.

I stand upon my right.

Ph. Don't trust to that!

Al. I will not budge!

Ph. Beware! This acrobat

May overleap the laws.

Al. I do not care.

Ph. You'll lose your case. Once more I say: Beware!

Al. I will not—I will sooner lose my suit.

Ph. Come, come!

Al. I'll see if wrong so absolute . . .

Ph. But, sir . . .

Al. I'll make probation in this case
Whether the age we live in is so base,

POETICAL DRAMA

And labors under so malign a curse,
'Twill wrong me in the eyes o' the universe.

Ph. O foolish wrath!

Al. I care not what it cost,
I'll test it, though my suit be ten times lost.

Ph. Be calm, be calm! If men could hear but half
Of your wild words, how loudly they would laugh!

Al. My curse light on the laughers!

Ph. Come, Alceste—

Let me submit you to a different test.
You harp on virtue, honor, truth—and yet
Do you not worship a confirmed coquette?
How does it come that you, who darkly frown
On the whole human race and set them down
As fools and villains all, still from that race
Choose for your adoration one fair face?
Why does your rigorous judgment not forswear
A fair face coupled with a heart unfair?
Eliante, a lady beauteous, pure, and good,
Smiles on you; so too does that haughty prude
Arsinoë—yet you let these fond ones sigh,
And only Celimene can draw your eye.
Do you admire in her those horrid crimes
And scandals that you censure in the times?
Do you condone, when lodged in her fair breast,
The faults that elsewhere make your soul protest?
Are they no longer faults in one so fair?
Or do you only see them elsewhere?

Al. No—by my faith—those foibles others see
In her I love—ah! how they torture me!
Yes, even when they lodge in her fair breast,
I see those blots that elsewhere I detest.
And yet, 'tis true, I cannot quite despair,

POETICAL DRAMA

Whate'er her faults—she is so heavenly fair!
I see them, I deplore them, but in vain!
I chide, I melt; I scold, yet love again;
And love condones and cancels all. I trust
Love will redeem her sins—it can—it must!

Ph. God speed you! That would be a nine days' wonder.
Think you she loves you truly?

Al. May Heaven's thunder
Impugn me if I doubt—I *know* she loves me!

Ph. But, if you can avouch her constancy,
Why does the fear of rivals fret your heart?

Al. Ah! 'tis the very trick of love to start
At every half-heard sound, and quake with fear
If even a rival's shadow fall too near.
Therefore I mean this day to fix a date
To hopes and fears and learn from her my fate.

Ph. Ah me! if I to-day the wooer were,
I'd woo sweet Eliante instead of her.
Perchance, hid in that heart so pure, so true,
Gleams the rare pearl of happiness—for you.

Al. My judgment echoes yours—and yet—'tis fated;
For when were love and judgment ever mated?
Your fears and doubts fill me with melancholy,
But reason never yet ruled lover's folly.

Ph. I would this day by an auspicious end
Might crown your love . . .

Oronte enters.

Oronte. Good sir, behold a friend!
Excuse me, if I take you unawares.
The ladies being gone, I've climbed the stairs

POETICAL DRAMA

To speak to you at once. You cannot dream
The warmth and altitude of my esteem,
And this esteem, this zeal, this love inspires
The first, last, greatest of all my desires,—
To be your friend! My heart, charmed by your merit,
And by the thousand graces you inherit,
Trusts you will love me in your turn, and feel
How true a friend I am—and how genteel.

*[During this speech Alceste remains dreamily absorbed,
as if unaware that he is being addressed. He becomes
attentive only when Oronte resumes.]*

They are for you—sir—all these eulogies.

Al. For me, sir?

Or. Aye—they surely can't displease?

Al. Oh, no! Yet, sir, I scarcely can believe
My ears—so great the honor I receive!

Or. By such esteem you scarce can be surprised,
Whose worth by all the world is recognized.

Al. Sir . . .

Or. There's no office in the state
That for your golden merit is too great.

Al. Sir . . .

Or. So supreme your worth, your rivals all
Seem but pale copies, you th' original.

Al. Sir . . .

Or. May the lightning blast me if I speak
One word I do not think! Now on your cheek
Let me imprint the seal of amity:
Call me your friend from this day forth, and be
The brother of my soul. Your promise—quick!
You'll be my friend?

Al. Sir . . .

Or. Sure, you do not stick

POETICAL DRAMA

At swearing . . .

Al. Sir, you honor me, indeed;
But friendship does not shoot up like a weed;
And men profane its sacred name and nature
Who sanction every random candidature.
It is a compact made with care and choice.
Friendship—and love—should wait on reason's voice.
And we might rue it on some later day
If we too quickly give our hearts away.

Or. Gad, sir! you speak like a philosopher.
I love you all the more for't. Let's defer,
Since that's your pleasure, till some future hour
These friendly bonds. Meantime, if I have power
To serve your hopes at court, I'm wholly yours,—
Yours, sir, to make all kinds of overtures.
The King consults me, heeds me, is my friend,
And I have hopes, plans, prospects without end.
Do not forget: I'm yours unto the death!
And, knowing all your skill and your good faith,
To seal our bond I now will bid you sit
In judgment on a sonnet I have writ.

Al. Sir, that's a task too hard for my poor wit;
I beg off . . .

Or. Why?

Al. I lack the skill to feign;
And, if a thing mislikes me, I'm too plain.

Or. The very thing I crave! You would do wrong
To make black white, to bracket weak and strong,
To call bad verses good—or good ones bad.

Al. Since you insist, why, sir, I shall be glad . . .

Or. A sonnet ('tis a sonnet), *Hope*—you see
It's for a lady that had smiled on me:
Hope—'tis not high-flown, pompous, swelling verse,
But tender rhyme, sweet, languorous—and terse.

POETICAL DRAMA

Al. We'll see, sir . . .

Or. *Hope*—I hope my polished ease
And gentlemanly melody may please,
And that my choice of words will hit your taste.

Al. We'll see, sir.

Or. Anyhow, I wrote in haste;
Gad, sir, it scarcely took a half-hour's time.

Al. Haste, sir, makes waste; slow time builds lofty rhyme.

Or. [*Recites.*]

Hope, I account thee but a fount
Of mingled joy and sorrow;
Thy waters mount, recede, remount,
Bubbling to-day and dry to-morrow.

Ph. A rare beginning! witty, every line!

Al. [*Aside.*] Rare! Witty! Tell him—do—that it's divine!

Or.

Phyllis, before your lips forswore
The love I bore, you murmured, "Yes";
Unless still more you hold in store,
Than heretofore, why acquiesce?

Ph. How gallantly you hint at her rebuff.

Al. [*Aside.*] What! do you praise this namby-pamby stuff?

Or.

In this lorn state if I must wait,
I'll antedate my destined fate,
This mortal coil untying;
So negative the hope you give!
So fugitive!—why should I live
Still sighing, crying, dying?

POETICAL DRAMA

Ph. Ah! how enchanting! What a dying fall!

Al. [*Aside.*] Plague take you, sycophant! I would this
scrawl,

This gimcrack, gibble-gabble, choke-pear sonnet,
Stuck in your throat, that you might strangle on it!
A dying fall, forsooth!

Ph. 'Tis full of matter,
Of pith, of fire, of style . . .

Or. I fear you flatter!

Al. [*Aside.*] Zounds!

Ph. Faith, not I.

Al. [*Aside.*] Ha! traitor!

Or. Well—no matter!

[*To Alceste.*] But you, sir, you have promised, without
ruth,

In all sincerity, to tell the truth.

Al. It is a ticklish trade to criticize,
And only eulogists are counted wise.
Sir, one day to a friend whose name I hide,
That begged me judge his verses, I replied:
“A gentleman indeed may be a poet,
If he but screen the fact so none may know it,
Make rhymes in secret and secrete his rhymes
From past, from present, and from future times;
But, if he violate this golden rule,
The proudest gentleman may play the fool.”

Or. And by rehearsing of this little chat
You mean to hint I'm wrong . . .

Al. I don't say that;
But I did say (to him) that frigid verse
To all who hear it is a baleful curse,
And one is damned by this criterion,
Though in all else he be a paragon.

Or. I half suspect you do not like my sonnet,

POETICAL DRAMA

And mean to pass an unkind judgment on it.

Al. I don't say that. I merely said, in brief,
That many an honest man thus comes to grief.

Or. Do I, sir, lurk behind this pseudonym?

Al. I don't say that. But, sir, I said (to him),
Why this mad lust to fashion odes and strophes?
And why beset the printer with these trophies?
For making useless books a man can give
One sole excuse: he wrote that he might live.
Believe me, exorcise this silly passion,
Or if some sweating devil makes you fashion
Couplets and quatrains, hide from mortal sight,
'Neath triple bolts and bars, the stuff you write.
You are an honest man, and all men know it,
While not a soul suspects you are a poet;
Then why rush into print and let men scan
A worthless poet in the honest man?
Such were the truths I tried to make him see.

Or. I see them perfectly, and quite agree.
But tell me, is there something in my sonnet . . . ?

Al. Sir, since again you ask my verdict on it,
It's downright bad! You've followed foolish models,
Who had no thought of nature in their noddles.
What means this line: *I count thee but a fount?*
Or this: *Thy waters mount, recede, remount?*
Or this: *In this lorn state if I must wait,*
 I'll antedate my destined fate?
Or this: *So negative the hope you give!*
 So fugitive!—why should I live . . . ?

Such flights of fancy travesty the heart:
Pure truth and feeling are the soul of art;
And all these far-fetched turns and glittering freaks
Are not the language simple nature speaks.
When whim is sovereign, judgment is displaced.

POETICAL DRAMA

Our untaught fathers showed a finer taste,
And I prefer to all our tortuous rhymes
This simple ditty of the olden times:
[*He recites.*]

If the king should say to me:
“Come, my lad, I’ll give to thee
My great city, Paris”—
And instead would take away
Her whom I shall love alway,
That so sweet and fair is,
I would say: “King Henry, nay,
Keep your city, Paris,
But take not my love away,
Her whom I shall love alway,
That so sweet and fair is.”

The rhymes are simple, and the style is plain;
But can’t you see how true it is, how sane?
And how pure passion breathes in every line,
Mocking the modern verse men deem so fine?
[*He sings.*]

If the king should say to me:
“Come, my lad, I’ll give to thee
My great city, Paris”—
And instead would take away
Her whom I shall love alway,
That so sweet and fair is,
I would say: “King Henry, nay,
Keep your city, Paris,
But take not my love away,
Her whom I shall love alway,
That so sweet and fair is.”

POETICAL DRAMA

Such is the language that true love inspires;
Laugh, if you like, at artless passion's fires!
I tell you this old ballad's sweeter far
Than all your florid, jewelled verses are.

Or. In any case, I know my sonnet's good.

Al. I'd say as much, sir, if I only could;
But since I can't, I beg you will permit
That I remain less spellbound by your wit.

Or. Critics more apt find not a word to blot.

Al. They have the art of feigning—I have not.

Or. Is wit so rare that you alone possess it?

Al. Is praise so cheap I must to you address it?

Or. I'd gladly see, as samples of your wit,
On this same theme, some verses you had writ.

Al. They might be bad as yours, sir, but I swear
I'd hide 'em from the world with proper care.

Or. I scorn your praise, sir, I can do without it.

Al. Indeed! Why then make all this stew about it?

Or. I tell you, sir, I do not like your tone.

Al. Ah! but you should—it's modeled on your own.

Or. My little sir, your language is too proud.

Al. My great sir, it shall not be disavowed.

Ph. Good friends, you go too far—in Heaven's name . . .

Or. You're right—I yield—I am indeed to blame.

[*To Alceste.*] Your valet, sir—until again we meet.

Al. Let me be yours—till then—sir, I entreat.

[*Exit Oronte.*]

Ph. So, there you are! through being too sincere
You have a duel with this coxcomb here.

'Twas plain as day, three words of barren praise . . .

Al. Silence, I say! O these degenerate days!

Ph. Come, come!

POETICAL DRAMA

Al. Let me begone!
Ph. Where?
Al. Nay—no more!
You drive me mad!
Ph. But, sir . . .
Al. My soul is sore
Past curing!
Ph. But . . .
Al. Don't dog my steps, I say!
I mean to flee this wicked world! Away!
Ph. I will not leave you in this savage mood
To fret and sting your soul in solitude.
[*He follows Alceste.*

Molière

60

SCENES FROM COMUS

THREE young persons, two brothers and their sister, were making their way through a drear and tangled wood to the house of their father, when the lady became weary and the brothers resolved to lodge for the night under a spreading group of pines. Leaving their sister, the brothers stepped to a neighboring thicket in search of berries and other woodland fruit, were overtaken by night, and now, their way quite lost, are wandering helplessly in the forest.

Elder Brother. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair Moon,
That wont'st to love the traveler's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up

POETICAL DRAMA

With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long-leveled rule of streaming light;
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Second Brother. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.
But, O that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, among rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement and affright?
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat?

Elder Brother. Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils:
For grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in Virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,

POETICAL DRAMA

As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what virtue would
By her own radiant light, though Sun and Moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude;
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all-to ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' the center, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the midday Sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Second Brother. 'Tis most true,
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch, with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,

POETICAL DRAMA

And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.

Elder Brother. I do not, brother,
Infer as if I thought my sister's state
Secure, without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope, rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenseless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Second Brother. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

Elder Brother. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own;
'Tis Chastity, my brother, Chastity:
She, that has that, is clad in complete steel;
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbored heaths,
Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of Chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountainer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity:
Yea there, where very Desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say, no evil thing that walks by night

POETICAL DRAMA

In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meager hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
That breaks his magic chains at Curfew time,
No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of Chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen, for ever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield,
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace, that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly Chastity,
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt;
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal: but when Lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,

POETICAL DRAMA

Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp,
Oft seen in charnel vaults and sepulchers
Lingering, and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

Second Brother. How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.¹

Meanwhile the lady, despairing of the return of her brothers, has been attracted by sounds of revelry, and going toward them has met, so she fancied, with a plain and kindly shepherd. By him she has been conducted, not, as he promised, to a low, safe cottage, but to a stately palace, where she now sits in an enchanted chair surrounded by Comus and his crew.

For the plain shepherd only seemed so to the lady by force of a magic spell. In reality he is Comus, the riotous son of Circe and of Bacchus; and the monstrous rabble who attend him—"headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women"—are his unhappy victims. Like his mother Circe he tempts whomsoever he may with "orient liquor in a crystal glass"—a pleasing but horrible poison that works a hideous change; and so perfect is the misery of those who suffer, that they—

*Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before;*

¹ With this speech compare Montaigne, *Prose*, pp. 19f.

POETICAL DRAMA

*And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.*

*Comus stands before the lady, and offers her the
fateful glass.*

Com. Nay, lady, sit; if I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or, as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lad. Fool, do not boast;
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled, while Heaven sees good.

Com. Why are you vexed, lady? Why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far: see, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season.
And first, behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrops mixed;
Not that nepenthes which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena,
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal like an ill borrower
With that which you received on other terms;
Scorning the unexempt condition,

POETICAL DRAMA

By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted; but, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lad. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage, and the safe abode,
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
With visored falsehood and base forgery?
And would'st thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer; none
But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good, is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.

Com. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odors, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons? and that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins

POETICAL DRAMA

She hatched the all-worshipt ore, and precious gems,
To store her-children with: if all the world
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised:
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth;
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility;
The Earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords,
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the Sun with shameless brows.
List, lady: be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship;
It is for homely features to keep home,
They had their name thence; coarse complexions,
And checks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,

POETICAL DRAMA

Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the Morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lad. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.—
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance; she, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance:
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and besecming share
Of that which lewdly pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid: for swinish Gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enough? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of Chastity,
Fain would I something say, yet to what end?
Thou hast not ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion, and high mystery,
That must be uttered to unfold the sage

POETICAL DRAMA

And serious doctrine of Virginity;
 And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
 More happiness than this thy present lot.
 Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
 That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
 Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced:
 Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth
 Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
 To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
 That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
 And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
 Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
 Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

Com. She fables not; I feel that I do fear
 Her words set off by some superior power;
 And though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
 Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
 Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,
 To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
 And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more;
 This is mere moral babble, and direct
 Against the canon-laws of our foundation;
 I must not suffer this: yet 'tis but the lees
 And settlings of a melancholy blood:
 But this will cure all straight: one sip of this
 Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
 Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise and taste.

At this point the brothers, guided hither by a spirit divinely sent, rush in with swords drawn, wrest the glass from the hand of Comus, and dash it against the ground. The rout make signs of resistance, but are driven away. In one respect, unhappily, the rescue miscarries. The false enchanter escapes,

POETICAL DRAMA

and with him the wand that would have enabled the brothers to free their sister from the spell that holds her. The spirit before mentioned, however, bethinks him of the nymph Sabrina, whose aid is forthwith invoked in song.

Sabrina fair!

Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honor's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save!

She appears, and by means of the following charm releases the lady from her peril.

Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnarèd chastity:
Brightest lady, look on me:
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept, of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next, this marble venomèd seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold:—
Now the spell hath lost his hold;
And I must haste, ere morning hour,
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

John Milton

III

LYRICAL POEMS

*If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their master's thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes;
If all the heavenly quintessence they 'still
From their immortal flowers of poesy
(Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit);
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,—
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the
least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.*

—CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

THE POET¹

ON a poet's lips I slept
 Dreaming like a love-adept
 In the sound his breathing kept;
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
 But feeds on the aërial kisses
 Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
 He will watch from dawn to gloom
 The lake-reflected sun illumine
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
 Nor heed nor see what things they be;
 But from these create he can
 Forms more real than living man,
 Nurslings of immortality!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth!
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new?
 Yes, and those of heaven commune
 With the spheres of sun and moon;
 With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
 And the parle of voices thund'rous;
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And one another, in soft ease
 Seated on Elysian lawns
 Browsed by none but Dian's fawns;

¹ Spoken by a "spirit" in *Prometheus Unbound*.

LYRICAL POEMS

Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumbered, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!

John Keats

LYRICAL POEMS

63

WE are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown:
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down.

We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself in our mirth;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Arthur W. E. O'Shaughnessy

LYRICAL POEMS

64 WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY

CAPTAIN, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenseless doors may seize,
If deed of honor did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground:¹ and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.²

John Milton

65 TO A FRIEND

WHO prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?
He much, the old man, who, clearest-souled of men,
Saw The Wide Prospect,³ and the Asian Fen,

¹ "When Thebes was destroyed (335 B. C.) and the citizens massacred by thousands, Alexander ordered the house of Pindar [the greatest of Greek lyric poets] to be spared." (From a note by F. T. Palgrave.)

² "Amongst Plutarch's vague stories, he says that when the Spartan confederacy in 404 B. C. took Athens, a proposal to demolish it was rejected through the effect produced on the commanders by hearing part of a chorus from the *Electra* of Euripides sung at a feast." (From a note by F. T. Palgrave.)

³ The name *Eurōpē* (Εὐρώπη, *the wide prospect*) probably describes the appearance of the European coast to the Greeks on the coast of Asia Minor opposite. The name *Asia*, again, comes, it has been thought, from the muddy fens of the rivers of Asia Minor, such as the Cayster or Mæander, which struck the imagination of the Greeks living near them. [Author's note.]

LYRICAL POEMS

And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though blind.
Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
Cleared Rome of what most shamed him. . But be his
My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole:
The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.¹

Matthew Arnold

66 FOR A COPY OF THEOCRITUS²

O SINGER of the field and fold,
Theocritus! Pan's pipe was thine,—
Thine was the happier Age of Gold.

For thee the scent of new-turned mold,
The beehives, and the murmuring pine,
O Singer of the field and fold!

Thou sang'st the simple feasts of old,—
The beechen bowl made glad with wine . . .
Thine was the happier Age of Gold.

Thou bad'st the rustic loves be told,—
Thou bad'st the tuneful reeds combine,
O Singer of the field and fold!

¹ The three writers alluded to are Homer, Epictetus, and Sophocles.

² Reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Alban Dobson and with the Oxford University Press.

LYRICAL POEMS

And round thee, ever-laughing, rolled
The blithe and blue Sicilian brine . . .
Thine was the happier Age of Gold.

Alas for us! Our songs are cold;
Our Northern suns too sadly shine:—
O Singer of the field and fold,
Thine was the happier Age of Gold!

Austin Dobson

67

TO VIRGIL¹

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE MANTUANS FOR THE
NINETEENTH CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;
Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;
Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;
Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;
Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,

¹ Reprinted with the permission of The Macmillan Company.

LYRICAL POEMS

Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;
Thou that seëst Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;
Light among the vanished ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no more;
Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound for ever of Imperial Rome—
Now the Rome of slaves hath perished,
and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sundered once from all the human race,
I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever molded by the lips of man.

Alfred Tennyson

68 "FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE"¹.

ROW us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!
So they rowed, and there we landed—"O venusta
Sirmio!"

¹ Reprinted with the permission of The Macmillan Company.—The words of the title—meaning "O my brother, hail and farewell!"—conclude a poem by Catullus mourning the death of a brother, of which the following is a prose rendering by Charles Stuttaford:

"Borne over many lands and many seas, I come, O my brother,

LYRICAL POEMS

There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,
Came that "Ave atque Vale" of the Poet's hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred years ago,
"Frater Ave atque Vale"—as we wandered to and fro
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

Alfred Tennyson

69 DANTE AND THE DIVINE COMEDY¹

TUSCAN, that wanderest through the realms of gloom,
With thoughtful pace, and sad, majestic eyes,
Stern thoughts and awful from thy soul arise,
Like Farinata from his fiery tomb.
Thy sacred song is like the trump of doom;
Yet in thy heart what human sympathies,
What soft compassion glows; as in the skies
The tender stars their clouded lamps relume!
Methinks I see thee stand with pallid cheeks
By Fra Hilario in his diocese,
As up the convent-walls, in golden streaks,
The ascending sunbeams mark the day's decrease;

to the sad spot where you repose; that I may render to you the last sad rites of the dead, and call, although in vain, to your dumb ashes. Since fate has snatched your dear presence from my eyes, alas, O my brother, so cruelly taken from me, yet receive these last sad rites, that are according to the pious usages of our forefathers and are washed with a brother's many tears, and now forever, O my brother, hail and farewell!" (Reprinted with the permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.)

In another poem—which may be seen below, p. 612—the Roman poet celebrates a return to his home on the peninsula, or "all-but-island," of Sirmio: in this occurs the "O venusta Sirmio!" ("O fair Sirmio").

¹ Editors' title. The editors are further responsible, in part, for the grouping of the sonnets.

LYRICAL POEMS

And, as he asks what there the stranger seeks,
Thy voice along the cloister whispers "Peace!"

OF T have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his paternoster o'er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.
So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.¹

HOW strange the sculptures that adorn these towers!
This crowd of statues, in whose folded sleeves
Birds build their nests; while canopied with leaves
Parvis and portal bloom like trellised bowers,
And the vast minster seems a cross of flowers!
But fiends and dragons on the gargoyle'd eaves
Watch the dead Christ between the living thieves,
And, underneath, the traitor Judas lowers!
Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle of song!

¹ Longfellow translated the *Divine Comedy* into English verse.

LYRICAL POEMS

I ENTER, and I see thee in the gloom
Of the long aisles, O poet saturnine!
And strive to make my steps keep pace with thine.
The air is filled with some unknown perfume;
The congregation of the dead make room
For thee to pass; the votive tapers shine;
Like rooks that haunt Ravenna's groves of pine,
The hovering echoes fly from tomb to tomb.
From the confessionals I hear arise
Rehearsals of forgotten tragedies,
And lamentations from the crypts below;
And then a voice celestial that begins
With the pathetic words, "Although your sins
As scarlet be," and ends with "as the snow."

O STAR of morning and of liberty!
O bringer of the light, whose splendor shines
Above the darkness of the Apennines,
Forerunner of the day that is to be!
The voices of the city and the sea,
The voices of the mountains and the pines,
Repeat thy song, till the familiar lines
Are footpaths for the thought of Italy!
Thy fame is blown abroad from all the heights,
Through all the nations, and a sound is heard,
As of a mighty wind, and men devout,
Strangers of Rome, and the new proselytes,
In their own language hear the wondrous word,
And many are amazed and many doubt.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
 We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
 Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
 Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
 Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
 Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
 Spares but the cloudy border of his base
 To the foiled searching of mortality;
 And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
 Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure,
 Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so!
 All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
 All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
 Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Matthew Arnold

MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men:
 O! raise us up, return to us again;
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:

¹ Dated London, 1802.

LYRICAL POEMS

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;
So didst thou travel on life's common way
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

William Wordsworth

72

YOUTH'S ANTIPHONY

“**I** LOVE you, sweet: how can you ever learn
How much I love you?” “You I love even so,
And so I learn it.” “Sweet, you cannot know
How fair you are.” “If fair enough to earn
Your love, so much is all my love’s concern.”
“My love grows hourly, sweet.” “Mine too doth grow,
Yet love seemed full so many hours ago!”
Thus lovers speak, till kisses claim their turn.
Ah! happy they to whom such words as these
In youth have served for speech the whole day long,
Hour after hour, remote from the world’s throng,
Work, contest, fame, all life’s confederate pleas,—
What while Love breathed in sighs and silences
Through two blent souls one rapturous undersong.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

73

O MY Luve’s like a red, red rose
That’s newly sprung in June:
O my Luve’s like the melodie
That’s sweetly played in tune.

LYRICAL POEMS

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I:
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

Robert Burns

74

JEAN

O F a' the airts the wind can blaw
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:

Airts: directions

Row: flow

LYRICAL POEMS

There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean.

O blaw ye westlin winds, blaw saft
Amang the leafy trees;
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale
Bring hame the laden bees;
And bring the lassie back to me
That's ay sae neat and clean;
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,
Sae charming is my Jean.

What sighs and vows amang the knowes
Hae passed atween us twa!
How fond to meet, how wae to part
That night she gaed awa!
The Powers aboon can only ken
To whom the heart is seen,
That nane can be sae dear to me
As my sweet lovely Jean!

Robert Burns

75

MARY MORISON

O MARY, at thy window be,
It is the wished, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see
That make the miser's treasure poor:

Knowes: *hills*

Shaw: *grove*

Westlin: *west*

LYRICAL POEMS

How blithely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen when to the trembling string
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,—
I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
Though this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sighed, and said amang them a',
“Ye are na Mary Morison.”

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace
Wha for thy sake wad gladly dee?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

Robert Burns

76

TAM GLEN

MY heart is a-breaking, dear tittie,
Some counsel unto me come len';
To anger them a' is a pity,
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen?

Braw: *handsome, gaily dressed*
Stoure: *dust, turmoil*

Tittie: *sister*

LYRICAL POEMS

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow,
 In poortith I might mak a fen':
 What care I in riches to wallow,
 If I maunna marry Tam Glen?

There's Lowrie, the laird o' Dumeller,
 "Guid-day to you," brute! he comes ben:
 He brags and he blaws o' his siller,
 But when will he dance like Tam Glen?

My minnie does constantly deave me,
 And bids me beware o' young men;
 They flatter, she says, to deceive me;
 But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen?

My daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,
 He'll gie me guid hunder marks ten:
 But, if it's ordained I maun take him,
 O wha will i get but Tam Glen?

Yestreen at the valentines' dealing,
 My heart to my mou gied a sten:
 For thrice I drew ane without failing,
 And thrice it was written, "Tam Glen"!

The last Halloween I was waukin
 My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken:
 His likeness cam up the house staukin,
 And the very gray brecks o' Tam Glen!

Ben: *into the parlor*
 Braw: *handsome*
 Brecks: *breeches*
 Deave: *deafen*

Droukit: *wet*
 Fen: *successful struggle*
 Minnie: *mother*
 Poortith: *poverty*

Sark-sleeve: *shirt-sleeve*
 Siller: *silver*
 Sten: *leap*
 Waukin: *watching*

LYRICAL POEMS

Come counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry;
I'll gie ye my bonnie black hen,
Gif ye will advise me to marry
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

Robert Burns

77

MY true-love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven:
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.

His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his because in me it bides:
My true-love hath my heart, and I have his.

Sir Philip Sidney

78

HAVING this day my horse, my hand, my lance
Guided so well that I obtained the prize,
Both by the judgment of the English eyes
And of some sent from that sweet enemy France;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance,
Town folks my strength; a daintier judge applies
His praise to sleight which from good use doth rise;
Some lucky wits impute it but to chance;
Others, because of both sides I do take
My blood from them who did excel in this,

LYRICAL POEMS

Think Nature me a man-at-arms did make.
How far they shot awry! the true cause is,
Stella looked on, and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race.

Sir Philip Sidney

79¹

NOR roses kindling when the Night grows old,
Nor lilies planted where a river brims,
Nor sound of lute, nor song-birds singing hymns,
Nor jewels bosomed in a band of gold:
Nor Zephyrs blowing softly o'er the wold,
Nor the wave's ripple round the prow it rims,
Nor dance of nymphs with slowly swaying limbs,
Nor all things springing after Winter's cold:
Nor bastioned camps thick-set with bristling pikes,
Nor caverns where the sunlight hardly strikes,
Nor soaring tree-tops clustered in the air,
Nor solemn stillness of dumb rocks, can yield
Me so much pleasure as a grassy field,
Wherein my hopes may pasture on Despair.

Pierre Ronsard

80

WHEN in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate;
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possest,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;

¹ The translation is by George Wyndham, and is reprinted with the permission of Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

LYRICAL POEMS

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on Thee—and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

William Shakespeare

81

WHEN in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights;
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have exprest
E'en such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they looked but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing;
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

William Shakespeare

82

TO CELIA

DRINK to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine.

LYRICAL POEMS

The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honoring thee
As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be;
But thou thereon didst only breathe
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee!

Ben Jonson

83

THE POETRY OF DRESS

A SWEET disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:—
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction,—
An erring lace, which here and there
Entrhals the crimson stomacher,—
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbands to flow confusedly,—
A winning wave, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat,—
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility,—
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part.

Robert Herrick

LYRICAL POEMS

84 TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO THE WARS

TELL me not, Sweet, I am unkind
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honor more.

Richard Lovelace

85 THE BANKS OF RHINE¹

THE castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks which bear the vine,
And hills all rich with blossomed trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these,
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strewed a scene, which I should see
With double joy wert *thou* with me.

¹ From a lyrical interlude in the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

LYRICAL POEMS

And peasant girls, with deep-blue eyes
And hands which offer early flowers,
Walk smiling o'er this paradise;
Above, the frequent feudal towers
Through green leaves lift their walls of gray;
And many a rock which steeply lowers,
And noble arch in proud decay,
Look o'er this vale of vintage-bowers;
But one thing want these banks of Rhine,—
Thy gentle hand to clasp in mine!

Lord Byron

86

TO AUGUSTA¹

I N the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.

Lord Byron

87

MAID OF ATHENS

M AID of Athens, ere we part,
Give, O give me back my heart!
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go,

Ζώνη μου, σάς ἀγαπῶ.²

¹ From *Stanzas to Augusta*.

² My Life, I love thee.

LYRICAL POEMS

By those tresses unconfined,
Woody by each Ægean wind;
By those lids whose jetty fringe
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge;
By those wild eyes like the roe,

Ζώη μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

By that lip I long to taste;
By that zone-encircled waist;
By all the token-flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well;
By love's alternate joy and woe,

Ζώη μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

Maid of Athens! I am gone:
Think of me, sweet! when alone.
Though I fly to Istambol,
Athens holds my heart and soul:
Can I cease to love thee? No!

Ζώη μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

Lord Byron

88

BRIGHT star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,

LYRICAL POEMS

To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

John Keats

89

THE INDIAN SERENADE

I ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how!
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs, they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
And the Champak odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart;—
As I must die on thine,
O! belovèd as thou art!

Oh lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast;—
Oh! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

ONE word is too often profaned
 For me to profane it,
 One feeling too falsely disdained
 For thee to disdain it.
 One hope is too like despair
 For prudence to smother,
 And pity from thee more dear
 Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love,
 But wilt thou accept not
 The worship the heart lifts above
 And the Heavens reject not,
 The desire of the moth for the star,
 Of the night for the morrow,
 The devotion to something afar
 From the sphere of our sorrow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

MUSIC, when soft voices die,
 Vibrates in the memory—
 Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
 Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
 Are heaped for the belovèd's bed;
 And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
 Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I

BIRDS in the high Hall-garden
 When twilight was falling,
 Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
 They were crying and calling.

Where was Maud? in our wood;
 And I—who else?—was with her,
 Gathering woodland lilies,
 Myriads blow together.

Birds in our woods sang
 Ringing thro' the valleys,
 Maud is here, here, here
 In among the lilies.

I kissed her slender hand,
 She took the kiss sedately;
 Maud is not seventeen,
 But she is tall and stately.

I to cry out on pride
 Who have won her favor!
 O, Maud were sure of heaven
 If lowliness could save her!.

I know the way she went
 Home with her maiden posy,
 For her feet have touched the meadows
 And left the daisies rosy.

¹ Lyrics from *Maud: A Monodrama*.

LYRICAL POEMS

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?
One is come to woo her.

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charley snarling!
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

II

RIVULET crossing my ground,
And bringing me down from the Hall
This garden-rose that I found,
Forgetful of Maud and me,
And lost in trouble and moving round
Here at the head of a tinkling fall,
And trying to pass to the sea;
O rivulet, born at the Hall,
My Maud has sent it by thee—
If I read her sweet will right—
On a blushing mission to me,
Saying in odor and color, “Ah be
Among the roses to-night.”

III

COME into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the roses blown.

LYRICAL POEMS

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves,
On a bed of daffodil sky,—
To faint in the light of the sun that she loves,
To faint in its light, and to die.

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirred
To the dancers dancing in tune,—
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

I said to the lily, "There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play."
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,
"For ever and ever mine!"

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clashed in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall

LYRICAL POEMS

From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs,
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet,
And the valleys of Paradise.

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sighed for the dawn and thee.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither! the dances are done;
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate!
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near";
And the white rose weeps, "She is late";
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear";
And the lily whispers, "I wait."

LYRICAL POEMS

She is coming, my own, my sweet!
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthly bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

Alfred Tennyson

93

THERE'S a woman like a dewdrop, she's so purer than the
purest;
And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith's
the surest:
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of
lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-
grape cluster,
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted
marble:
Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the
bird's warble!
And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights
were moonless,
Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's out-
break tuneless,
If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!)
adore her,
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—
I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she
makes me!

Robert Browning

NAY but you, who do not love her,
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
 And this last fairest tress of all,
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because you spend your lives in praising;
 To praise, you search the wide world over:
 Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
 Above this tress, and this, I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much!

Robert Browning

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I WONDER do you feel to-day
 As I have felt since, hand in hand,
 We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
 This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
 Has tantalized me many times,
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes
 To catch at and let go.

LYRICAL POEMS

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin; yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way,
While heaven looks from its towers!

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

LYRICAL POEMS

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

No, I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

Robert Browning

96

WELL I remember how you smiled
To see me write your name upon
The soft sea-sand . . . “*O! what a child!*
You think you're writing upon stone!”
I have since written what no tide
Shall ever wash away, what men
Unborn shall read o'er ocean wide
And find Ianthe's name again.

Walter Savage Landor

LYRICAL POEMS

97

PROUD word you never spoke, but you will speak
Four not exempt from pride some future day.
Resting on one white hand a warm wet cheek
Over my open volume, you will say,
“This man loved *me!*” then rise and trip away.

Walter Savage Landor

98

RONSARD TO HIS MISTRESS

(IMITATED FROM THE FRENCH)

SOME winter night, shut snugly in
Beside the faggot in the hall,
I think I see you sit and spin,
Surrounded by your maidens all.
Old tales are told, old songs are sung,
Old days come back to memory;
You say, “When I was fair and young,
A poet sang of me!”

There’s not a maiden in your hall,
Though tired and sleepy ever so,
But wakes, as you my name recall,
And longs the history to know.
And, as the piteous tale is said,
Of lady cold and lover true,
Each, musing, carries it to bed,
And sighs and envies you!

“Our lady’s old and feeble now,”
They’ll say: “she once was fresh and fair,
And yet she spurned her lover’s vow,
And heartless left him to despair:

LYRICAL POEMS

The lover lies in silent earth,
No kindly mate the lady cheers;
She sits beside a lonely hearth,
With threescore and ten years!"

Ah! dreary thoughts and dreams are those,
But wherefore yield me to despair,
While yet the poet's bosom glows,
While yet the dame is peerless fair!
Sweet lady mine! while yet 'tis time
Requite my passion and my truth,
And gather in their blushing prime
The roses of your youth!

William Makepeace Thackeray

99

ODE TO CASSANDRA¹

SEE, Lady, how the selfsame rose,
Which in the morning did disclose
Its purple petals to the sun,
Amid the twilight's darkening shades
With drooping, damask petals fades—
Sweet damask hue, so like your own!

Alas! see how each flitting hour,
My Lady, this pale purple flower
Doth of its fragile beauties reave.
Ah, Nature, why so pitiless!
And why should roses flourish less
Than duress a day from morn to eve!

¹ Translated by William F. Giese.

LYRICAL POEMS

Nay, heed, oh heed me, Lady mine,
While yet the roses bud and twine
Athwart the marble of your brow,
And cull youth's blossoms, lovely Maid—
Lest all untouched they faint and fade
As this sweet flower is fading now!

Pierre Ronsard

100

GO, lovely rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair!

Edmund Waller

AT THE CHURCH GATE

ALTHOUGH I enter not,
 Yet round about the spot
 Ofttimes I hover;
 And near the sacred gate,
 With longing eyes I wait,
 Expectant of her.

The Minster bell tolls out
 Above the city's rout,
 And noise and humming;
 They've hushed the Minster bell:
 The organ 'gins to swell;
 She's coming, she's coming!

My lady comes at last,
 Timid, and stepping fast
 And hastening hither,
 With modest eyes downcast;
 She comes—she's here—she's past!
 May Heaven go with her!

Kneel undisturbed, fair Saint!
 Pour out your praise or plaint
 Meekly and duly;
 I will not enter there,
 To sully your pure prayer
 With thoughts unruly.

LYRICAL POEMS

But suffer me to pace
Round the forbidden place,
 Lingering a minute,
Like outcast spirits, who wait,
And see, through Heaven's gate,
Angels within it.

William Makepeace Thackeray

102

TO HELEN

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy-Land!

Edgar Allan Poe

103

SWEET stream, that winds through yonder glade,
Apt emblem of a virtuous maid,—
Silent and chaste she steals along,
Far from the world's gay, busy throng;
With gentle yet prevailing force,

LYRICAL POEMS

Intent upon her destined course;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where'er she goes;
Pure-bosomed as that watery glass,
And Heaven reflected in her face.

William Cowper

104

THREE years she grew in sun and shower;
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown:
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse; and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm,
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
E'en in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mold the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

LYRICAL POEMS

“The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

“And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell.”

Thus Nature spake. The work was done,—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

William Wordsworth

105

THE SOLITARY REAPER

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

LYRICAL POEMS

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands;
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

William Wordsworth

SHE stood breast high amid the corn,
Clasped by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

LYRICAL POEMS

On her cheek an autumn flush
Deeply ripened:—such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest none could tell;
But long lashes veiled a light
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
Made her tressy forehead dim;—
Thus she stood amid the stooks
Praising God with sweetest looks:—

Sure, I said, heav'n did not mean
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean;
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

Thomas Hood

107

TO PERDITA, SINGING¹

THY voice is like a fountain,
Leaping up in clear moonshine;
Silver, silver, ever mounting,
Ever sinking,
Without thinking,
To that brimful heart of thine.
Every sad and happy feeling,
Thou hast had in bygone years,

¹ Only the first strophes of the poem are given. Four lines of the second strophe are used by W. H. Hudson in describing the note of a South American thrush. See *Prose*, pp. 111f.

LYRICAL POEMS

Through thy lips comes stealing, stealing,
Clear and low;
All thy smiles and all thy tears
In thy voice awaken,
And sweetness, wove of joy and woe,
From their teaching it hath taken:
Feeling and music move together,
Like a swan and shadow ever
Floating on a sky-blue river
In a day of cloudless weather.

It hath caught a touch of sadness,
Yet it is not sad;
It hath tones of clearest gladness,
Yet it is not glad;
A dim, sweet twilight voice it is
Where to-day's accustomed blue
Is over-grayed with memories,
With starry feelings quivered through.

Thy voice is like a fountain,
Leaping up in sunshine bright,
And I never weary counting
Its clear droppings, lone and single,
Or when in one full gush they mingle,
Shooting in melodious light.

James Russell Lowell

108

SHE was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight:
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;

LYRICAL POEMS

Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveler between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

William Wordsworth

LYRICAL POEMS

109

SHE walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes,
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face,
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek and o'er that brow
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent.

Lord Byron

110

TO A GREEK GIRL¹

WITH breath of thyme and bees that hum,
Across the years you seem to come,—
Across the years with nymph-like head,
And wind-blown brows unfilleted;

¹ Reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Alban Dobson and with the Oxford University Press.

LYRICAL POEMS

A girlish shape that slips the bud
In lines of unspoiled symmetry;
A girlish shape that stirs the blood
With pulse of Spring, Autonoë!

Where'er you pass,—where'er you go,
I hear the pebbly rillet flow;
Where'er you go,—where'er you pass,
There comes a gladness on the grass;
You bring blithe airs where'er you tread,—
Blithe airs that blow from down and sea;
You wake in me a Pan not dead,—
Not wholly dead!—Autonoë!

How sweet with you on some green sod
To wreath the rustic garden-god;
How sweet beneath the chestnut's shade
With you to weave a basket-braid;
To watch across the stricken chords
Your rosy-twinkling fingers flee;
To woo you in soft woodland words,
With woodland pipe, Autonoë!

In vain,—in vain! The years divide:
Where Thamis rolls a murky tide,
I sit and fill my painful reams,
And see you only in my dreams;—
A vision, like Alcestis, brought
From under-lands of Memory,—
A dream of Form in days of Thought,—
A dream,—a dream, Autonoë!

Austin Dobson

LYRICAL POEMS

III

THE HIGHLAND GIRL

SWEET Highland Girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower!
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost bounty on thy head:
And these gray rocks; that household lawn;
Those trees—a veil just half withdrawn;
This fall of water that doth make
A murmur near the silent lake;
This little bay; a quiet road
That holds in shelter thy abode;
In truth together do ye seem
Like something fashioned in a dream;
Such forms as from their covert peep
When earthly cares are laid asleep!
But O fair Creature! in the light
Of common day, so heavenly bright,
I bless Thee, Vision as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart:
God shield thee to thy latest years!
Thee, neither know I, nor thy peers;
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away;
For never saw I mien or face
In which more plainly I could trace
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here scattered like a random seed,
Remote from men, Thou dost not need

LYRICAL POEMS

The embarrassed look of shy distress,
And maidenly shamefacedness:
Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a mountaineer:
A face with gladness overspread;
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred;
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays;
With no restraint, but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech:
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life!
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee who art so beautiful?
O happy pleasure! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell;
Adopt your homely ways and dress,
A shepherd, thou a shepherdess!
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality:
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea: and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighborhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see!
Thy elder brother I would be,

LYRICAL POEMS

Thy father—anything to thee!
Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.
Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompense.
In spots like these it is we prize
Our memory, feel that she hath eyes:
Then why should I be loath to stir?
I feel this place was made for her;

To give new pleasure like the past,
Continued long as life shall last.
Nor am I loath, though pleased at heart,
Sweet Highland Girl! from thee to part;
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold
As I do now, the cabin small,
The lake, the bay, the waterfall;
And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

William Wordsworth

112

HIGHLAND MARY

YE banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

Braes: *hillsides*

Drumlie: *muddy*

LYRICAL POEMS

How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow and locked embrace
Our parting was fu' tender;
And pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder;
But, oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kissed sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly;
And moldering now in silent dust
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

Robert Burns

113

TO MARY IN HEAVEN

THOU lingering star, with lessening ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.

LYRICAL POEMS

O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,—
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace;
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr, gurgling, kissed his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods, thickening green;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twined amorous round the raptured scene;
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,—
Till soon, too soon, the glowing west
Proclaimed the speed of wingèd day.

Still o'er these scenes my memory wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care!
Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
•See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Robert Burns

LYRICAL POEMS

114

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and oh,
The difference to me!

William Wordsworth

115

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

William Wordsworth

116

ROSE AYLMER

AH what avails the sceptered race!
 Ah what the form divine!
 What every virtue, every grace!
 Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
 Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
 May weep, but never see,
 A night of memories and of sighs
 I consecrate to thee.

Walter Savage Landor

117

HELEN OF KIRCONNELL

I WAD I were where Helen lies;
 Night and day on me she cries;
 O that I were where Helen lies
 On fair Kirconnell lea!

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
 And curst the hand that fired the shot,
 When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
 And died to succor me!

O think na but my heart was sair
 When my Love dropt down and spak nae mair!
 I laid her down wi' meikle care
 On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the waterside,
 Nane but my foe to be my guide,
 Nane but my foe to be my guide,
 On fair Kirconnell lea;

Burd: *maid*

Meikle: *great*

LYRICAL POEMS

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hackèd him in pieces sma',
I hackèd him in pieces sma',
For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll make a garland of thy hair
Shall bind my heart for evermair
Until the day I dee.

O that I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
Says, "Haste and come to me!"

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
If I were with thee, I were blest,
Where thou lies low and takes thy rest
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wad my grave were growing green,
A winding-sheet drawn ower my een,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wad I were where Helen lies;
Night and day on me she cries;
And I am weary of the skies,
Since my Love died for me.

Old Ballad

THE SLEEPER

AT midnight, in the month of June,
 I stand beneath the mystic moon.
 An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,
 Exhales from out her golden rim,
 And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
 Upon the quiet mountain top,
 Steals drowsily and musically
 Into the universal valley.
 The rosemary nods upon the grave;
 The lily lolls upon the wave;
 Wrapping the fog about its breast,
 The ruin molders into rest;
 Looking like Lethe, see! the lake
 A conscious slumber seems to take,
 And would not, for the world, awake.
 All Beauty sleeps!—and lo! where lies
 Irene, with her Destinies!

Oh, lady bright! can it be right—
 This window open to the night?
 The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
 Laughingly through the lattice drop—
 The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
 Flit through thy chamber in and out,
 And wave the curtain canopy
 So fitfully—so fearfully—
 Above the closed and fringed lid
 'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
 That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
 Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!

LYRICAL POEMS

Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
Why and what art thou dreaming here?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden trees!
Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all solemn silentness!

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!
Heaven have her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
Forever with unopened eye,
While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
As it is lasting, so be deep!
Soft may the worms about her creep!
Far in the forest, dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold—
Some vault that oft hath flung its black
And wingèd panels fluttering back,
Triumphant o'er the crested palls
Of her grand family funerals—
Some sepulcher, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood, many an idle stone—
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She ne'er shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within.

Edgar Allan Poe

TO ONE IN PARADISE

THOU wast all that to me, love,
 For which my soul did pine—
 A green isle in the sea, love,
 A fountain and a shrine,
 All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
 And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last!
 Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise
 But to be overcast!
 A voice from out the Future cries,
 “On! on!”—but o’er the Past
 (Dim gulf!) my spirit hovering lies
 Mute, motionless, aghast!

For, alas! alas! with me
 The light of Life is o’er!
 “No more—no more—no more—”
 (Such language holds the solemn sea
 To the sands upon the shore)
 Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
 Or the stricken eagle soar!

And all my days are trances,
 And all my nightly dreams
 Are where thy gray eye glances,
 And where thy footstep gleams—
 In what ethereal dances,
 By what eternal streams.

Edgar Allan Poe

THE eyes that weep for pity of the heart
 Have wept so long that their grief languisheth,
 And they have no more tears to weep withal:
 And now, if I would ease me of a part
 Of what, little by little, leads to death,
 It must be done by speech, or not at all.
 And because often, thinking, I recall
 How it was pleasant, ere she went afar,
 To talk of her with you, kind damozels,
 I talk with no one else,
 But only with such hearts as women's are.
 And I will say,—still sobbing as speech fails,—
 That she hath gone to Heaven suddenly,
 And hath left Love below, to mourn with me.

Beatrice is gone up into high Heaven,
 The kingdom where the angels are at peace;
 And lives with them; and to her friends is dead.
 Not by the frost of winter was she driven
 Away, like others; nor by summer-heats;
 But through a perfect gentleness, instead.
 For from the lamp of her meek lowlihead
 Such an exceeding glory went up hence
 That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,
 Until a sweet desire
 Entered Him for that lovely excellence,
 So that He bade her to Himself aspire:
 Counting this weary and most evil place
 Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.

¹ From *La Vita Nuova*. Translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

LYRICAL POEMS

Wonderfully out of the beautiful form
Soared her clear spirit, waxing glad the while;
And is in its first home, there where it is.
Who speaks thereof, and feels not the tears warm
Upon his face, must have become so vile
As to be dead to all sweet sympathies.
Out upon him! an abject wretch like this
May not imagine anything of her,—
He needs no bitter tears for his relief.
But sighing comes, and grief,
And the desire to find no comforter
(Save only Death, who makes all sorrow brief),
To him who for a while turns in his thought
How she hath been among us, and is not.

With sighs my bosom always laboreth
In thinking, as I do continually,
Of her for whom my heart now breaks apace;
And very often when I think of death,
Such a great inward longing comes to me
That it will change the color of my face;
And, if the idea settles in its place,
All my limbs shake as with an ague-fit;
Till, starting up in wild bewilderment,
I do become so shent
That I go forth, lest folk misdoubt of it.
Afterward, calling with a sore lament
On Beatrice, I ask, "Canst thou be dead?"
And calling on her, I am comforted.

Grief with its tears, and anguish with its sighs,
Come to me now whene'er I am alone;
So that I think the sight of me gives pain.
And what my life hath been, that living dies,

LYRICAL POEMS

Since for my lady the New Birth's begun,
I have not any language to explain.
And so, dear ladies, though my heart were fain,
I scarce could tell indeed how I am thus.
All joy is with my bitter life at war;
Yea, I am fallen so far
That all men seem to say, "Go out from us,"
Eyeing my cold white lips, how dead they are.
But she, though I be bowed unto the dust,
Watches me; and will guerdon me, I trust.

Weep, pitiful Song of mine, upon thy way,
To the dames going and the damozels
For whom and for none else
Thy sisters have made music many a day.
Thou, that art very sad and not as they,
Go dwell thou with them as a mourner dwells.

Dante

121

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

THE blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

LYRICAL POEMS

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

LYRICAL POEMS

And still she bowed herself and stooped
 Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
 The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
 Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
 Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
 Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
 The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
 Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
 She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
 Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
 Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be harkened? When those bells
 Possessed the midday air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
 Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
 For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
 Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
 And shall I feel afraid?

LYRICAL POEMS

“When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I’ll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God’s sight.

“We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

“We two will lie i’ the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

“And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know.”

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say’st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

LYRICAL POEMS

“We two,” she said, “will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

“Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

“He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

“Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aurcoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

“There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.”

LYRICAL POEMS

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
“All this is when he comes.” She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, filled
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

122 A SONG OF ANGIOLA IN HEAVEN¹

FLOWERS,—that have died upon my Sweet,
Lulled by the rhythmic dancing beat
Of her young bosom under you,—
Now will I show you such a thing
As never, through thick buds of Spring,
Betwixt the daylight and the dew,
The Bird whose being no man knows—
The voice that waketh all night through—
Tells to the Rose.

For lo,—a garden-place I found,
Well filled of leaves, and stilled of sound,
Well flowered, with red fruit marvelous;
And 'twixt the shining trunks would flit
Tall knights and silken maids, or sit

¹ Reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Alban Dobson and with the Oxford University Press.

LYRICAL POEMS

With faces bent and amorous;—
There, in the heart thereof, and crowned
With woodbine and amaracus,
My Love I found.

Alone she walked,—ah, well I wis,
My heart leapt up for joy of this!—
Then when I called to her her name,—
The name, that like a pleasant thing
Men's lips remember, murmuring,—
At once across the sward she came:
Full fain she seemed, my own dear maid,
And askèd ever as she came,
“Where hast thou stayed?”

“Where hast thou stayed?”—she asked as though
The long years were an hour ago;
But I spake not, nor answerèd,
For, looking in her eyes, I saw
A light not lit of mortal law;
And in her clear cheek's changeless red,
And sweet, unshaken speaking found
That in this place the Hours were dead,
And Time was bound.

“This is well done,”—she said,—“in thee,
O Love, that thou art come to me,
To this green garden glorious;
Now truly shall our life be sped
In joyance and all goodlihed,
For here all things are fair to us,
And none with burden is oppressed,
And none is poor or piteous,—
For here is Rest.

LYRICAL POEMS

“No formless Future blurs the sky;
Men mourn not here, with dull dead eye,
By shrouded shapes of Yesterday;
Betwixt the Coming and the Past
The flawless life hangs fixen fast
In one unwearying To-day,
That darkens not; for Sin is shriven,
Death from the doors is thrust away,
And here is Heaven.”

At “Heaven” she ceased;—and lifted up
Her fair head like a flower-cup,
With rounded mouth, and eyes aglow;
Then set I lips to hers, and felt,—
Ah, God,—the hard pain fade and melt,
And past things change to painted show;
The song of quiring birds outbroke;
The lit leaves laughed,—sky shook, and lo,
I swooned,—and woke.

And now, O Flowers,—
Ye that indeed are dead,—
Now for all waiting hours,
Well am I comforted;
For of a surety, now, I see
That, without dim distress
Of tears, or weariness,
My lady, verily, awaiteth me;
So that until with Her I be,
For my dear Lady’s sake
I am right fain to make
Out from my pain a pillow, and to take
Grief for a golden garment unto me;

LYRICAL POEMS

Knowing that I, at last, shall stand
In that green garden-land,
And, in the holding of my dear Love's hand,
Forget the grieving and the misery.

Austin Dobson

123 THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES¹

TELL me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Where's Héloïse, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abcillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

¹ Translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

LYRICAL POEMS

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword,—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

François Villon

124

WALY WALY

O WALY waly up the bank,
And waly waly down the brae,
And waly waly yon burnside
Where I and my Love wont to gae!
I leant my back unto an aik,
I thought it was a trusty tree;
But first it bowed, and syne it brak,
Sae my true Love did lichtly me.

O waly waly, but love be bonny
A little time while it is new;
But when 'tis auld, it waxeth cauld
And fades awa' like morning dew.
O wherefore should I busk my head?
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true Love has me forsook,
And says he'll never loe me mair.

Now Arthur-seat sall be my bed;
The sheets shall ne'er be 'fild by me:
Saint Anton's well sall be my drink,
Since my true Love has forsaken me.

Aik: oak
Brae: hillside

Burnside: brookside
Busk: deck

Syne: afterwards
Waly: woe! alas!

LYRICAL POEMS

Marti'mas wind, when wilt thou blaw
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?
O gentle Death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am wearie.

'Tis not the frost, that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie;
'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry,
But my Love's heart grown cauld to me,
When we came in by Glasgow town
We were a comely sight to see;
My Love was clad in the black velvét,
And I myself in cramasie.

But had I wist, before I kist,
That love had been sae ill to win;
I had locked my heart in a case of gowd
And pinned it with a siller pin.
And, O! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I myself were dead and gane,
For a maid again I'll never be.

Old Ballad

125

THE BANKS O' DOON

YE banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care?
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons through the flowering thorn;
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed—never to return.

Braes: *hillsides*
Cramasie: *crimson*

Fell: *severely*
Gowd: *gold*

Wist: *known*

LYRICAL POEMS

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pou'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause luvver stole my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

Robert Burns

126

WHEN we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted,
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this!

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow;
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?

Ilka: *every*

LYRICAL POEMS

They know not I knew thee
Who knew thee too well:
Long, long shall I rue thee
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met:
In silence I grieve
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?—
With silence and tears.

Lord Byron

127

LOVE'S FAREWELL

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part,—
Nay I have done, you get no more of me;
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies;
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,
—Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou mightst him yet recover!

Michael Drayton

HORACE

WHILST I was dear and thou wert kind,
 And I, and I alone, might lie
 Upon thy snowy breast reclined,
 Not Persia's king so blest as I.

LYDIA

Whilst I to thee was all in all,
 Nor Chloë might with Lydia vie,
 Renowned in ode or madrigal,
 Not Roman Ilia famed as I.

HORACE

I now am Thracian Chloë's slave,
 With hand and voice that charms the air,
 For whom even death itself I'd brave,
 So fate the darling girl would spare!

LYDIA

I dote on Calaïs—and I
 Am all his passion, all his care,
 For whom a double death I'd die,
 So fate the darling boy would spare!

¹ Translated by Sir Theodore Martin.

LYRICAL POEMS

HORACE

What if our ancient love return,
And bind us with a closer tie,
If I the fair-haired Chloë spurn,
And as of old for Lydia sigh?

LYDIA

Though lovelier than yon star is he,
Thou fickle as an April sky,
More churlish, too, than Adria's sea,
With thee I'd live, with thee I'd die!

Horace

129

WHY so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prythee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prythee, why so pale?

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Prythee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
Saying nothing do't?
Prythee, why so mute?

Quit, quit, for shame! this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her:
The devil take her!

Sir John Suckling

THE MANLY HEART

SHALL I, wasting in despair,
 Die because a woman's fair?
 Or make pale my cheeks with care
 'Cause another's rosy are?
 Be she fairer than the day
 Or the flowery meads in May—
 If she think not well of me,
 What care I how fair she be?

Shall my silly heart be pined
 'Cause I see a woman kind;
 Or a well disposèd nature
 Joinèd with a lovely feature?
 Be she mecker, kinder, than
 Turtle-dove or pelican,
 If she be not so to me,
 What care I how kind she be?

Shall a woman's virtues move
 Me to perish for her love?
 Or her well-deservings known
 Make me quite forget mine own?
 Be she with that goodness blest
 Which may merit name of Best;
 If she be not such to me,
 What care I how good she be?

'Cause her fortune seems too high,
 Shall I play the fool and die?
 She that bears a noble mind,
 If not outward helps she find,

LYRICAL POEMS

Thinks what with them he would do
That without them dares her woo;
And unless that mind I see,
What care I how great she be?

Great or good, or kind or fair,
I will ne'er the more despair;
If she love me, this believe,
I will die ere she shall grieve;
If she slight me when I woo,
I can scorn and let her go;
For if she be not for me,
What care I for whom she be?

George Wither

131

DUNCAN GRAY

DUNCAN GRAY cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe Yule night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't:
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Looked asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

Duncan fleechd, and Duncan prayed;
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig;
Duncan sighed baith out and in,
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
Spak o' lowpin ower a linn!

Abeigh: *back, aloof*
Bleer't: *bleared, dimmed*
Fleechd: *begged, coaxed*
Fou: *full, tipsy*

Gart: *made*
Grat: *cried*
Linn: *waterfall*

Lowpin: *leaping*
Skeigh: *coy, saucy*
Unco: *remarkably*

LYRICAL POEMS

Time and chance are but a tide,
Slighted love is sair to bide;
Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie dee?
She may gae to—France for me!

How it comes let doctors tell,
Meg grew sick—as he grew heal;
Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief a sigh she brings;
And O, her een, they spak sic things!

Duncan was a lad o' grace;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't!
Maggie's was a piteous case;
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't!
Duncan couldna be her death,
Swelling pity smoored his wrath;
Now they're crouse and canty baith:
 Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

Robert Burns

132

HOW delicious is the winning
Of a kiss at love's beginning,
When two mutual hearts are sighing
For the knot there's no untying!

Yet remember, 'midst your wooing,
Love has bliss, but Love has ruing;
Other smiles may make you fickle,
Tears for other charms may trickle.

Canty: *gay*
Crouse: *jolly*

Hizzie: *hussy, girl*

Smoored: *smothered*

LYRICAL POEMS

Love he comes, and Love he tarries,
Just as fate or fancy carries;
Longest stays, when sorest chidden;
Laughs and flies, when pressed and bidden.

Bind the sea to slumber stilly,
Bind its odor to the lily,
Bind the aspen ne'er to quiver,
Then bind Love to last for ever.

Love's a fire that needs renewal
Of fresh beauty for its fuel:
Love's wing molts when caged and captured,
Only free, he soars enraptured.

Can you keep the bee from ranging
Or the ringdove's neck from changing?
No! nor fettered Love from dying
In the knot there's no untying.

Thomas Campbell

133

LET me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:—
O no! it is an ever-fixèd mark
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;

LYRICAL POEMS

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out e'en to the edge of doom:—
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

William Shakespeare

134¹

THE while that in mine eyes tears yet may spring
To mourn past happiness beside thee spent,
And that my voice can, keeping its intent,
Still in despite of sighs have strength to sing;
The while my hand can stretch the light lute's string
In praise of loveliness so excellent;
The while my soul is willingly content
In knowing thee to know no other thing;
That little while I will not ask to die;
But when I find these wells of grief grown dry,
My voice broken, my hand bereft of power,
And my soul lingering on the deathward way,
Too weak to show love's signals: in that hour
May death then darken my most radiant day.

Louise Labé

135 SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE²

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:

¹ The translation is by George Wyndham, and is reprinted with the permission of Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

² "Sonnets from the Portuguese," as a whole, is a cycle of forty-four sonnets, in which the author has recorded the inner history of her love for Robert Browning. The main incidents or aspects of this history may be inferred from the twelve poems here reprinted. These are presented in their original order, and include the first, and the last two, of the cycle.

LYRICAL POEMS

And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove, . . .
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death," I said. But there,
The silver answer rang, . . . "Not Death, but Love."

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress-tree?
The chrism is on thine head; on mine the dew:
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet.¹ Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn

¹ An allusion to a scene in Sophocles' *Electra*. See above, pp. 347f.

LYRICAL POEMS

Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well, perhaps. But if, instead,
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The gray dust up . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my belovèd, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off, then! Go.

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,

LYRICAL POEMS

And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

I F thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble, and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears, and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward as in crushing low!
And, as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

LYRICAL POEMS

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length and say
“Take it.” My day of youth went yesterday:
My hair no longer bounds to my foot’s glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more; it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow’s trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but love is justified,—
Take it thou, finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

MY letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it—this . . . the paper’s light . . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and quailed
As if God’s future thundered on my past.
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

IF I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange,
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing, and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,

LYRICAL POEMS

When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors,—another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love has tried,
To conquer grief tries more, as all things prove;
For grief, indeed, is love and grief beside.
Alas! I have grieved so, I am hard to love.
Yet love me, wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

HOW do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers

LYRICAL POEMS

Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colors true,
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

136

EPITHALAMION¹

YE learned sisters, which have oftentimes
I Beene to me ayding, others to adorne,
Whom ye thought worthy of your graceful rymes,
That even the greatest did not greatly scorne
To heare theyr names sung in your simple layes,
But joyed in theyr praise;
And when ye list your owne mishaps to mourne,
Which death, or love, or fortunes wreck did rayse,
Your string could soone to sadder tenor turne,
And teach the woods and waters to lament
Your dolefull dreriment:
Now lay those sorrowfull complaints aside;
And, having all your heads with girlands crownd,
Helpe me mine owne loves prayses to resound;
Ne let the same of any be envide:
So Orpheus did for his owne bride!
So I unto myselfe alone will sing;
The woods shall to me answer, and my Eccho ring.

Early, before the worlds light-giving lampe
His golden beame upon the hils doth spread,

¹ In this ode the poet celebrates his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle.

LYRICAL POEMS

Having disperst the nights unchearefull dampe,
 Doe ye awake; and, with fresh lusty-hed,
 Go to the bowre of my beloved love,
 My truest turtle-dove;
 Bid her awake; for Hymen is awake,
 And long since ready forth his maske to move,
 With his bright Tead that flames with many a flake,
 And many a bachelor to waite on him,
 In theyr fresh garments trim.
 Bid her awake therefore, and soone her dight,
 For lo! the wished day is come at last,
 That shall, for all the paynes and sorrowes past,
 Pay to her usury of long delight:
 And, whylest she doth her dight,
 Doe ye to her of joy and solace sing,
 That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Bring with you all the Nymphes that you can heare,
 Both of the rivers and the forrests greene,
 And of the sea that neighbors to her neare:
 Al with gay girlands goodly wel bescene.
 And let them also with them bring in hand
 Another gay girland,
 For my fayre love, of lillyes and of roses,
 Bound truelovewize, with a blew silke riband.
 And let them make great store of bridale poses,
 And let them eeke bring store of other flowers,
 To deck the bridale bowers.
 And let the ground whereas her foot shall tread,
 For feare the stones her tender foot should wrong,
 Be strewed with fragrant flowers all along,
 And diapered lyke the discolored mead.

Bescene: *arrayed*
 Diapered: *variegated*
 Dight: *dress*

Discolored: *many-colored*
 Eeke: *also*
 Flake: *flash*

Lusty-hed: *vigor*
 Tead: *torch*

LYRICAL POEMS

Which done, doe at her chamber dore awayt,
For she will waken strayt;
The whiles doe ye this song unto her sing,
The woods shall to you answer, and your Eccho ring.

Ye Nymphes of Mulla, which with careful heed
The silver scaly trouts doe tend full well,
And greedy pikes which use therein to feed;
(Those trouts and pikes all others doo excell;)
And ye likewise, which keepe the rushy lake,
Where none doo fishes take;
Bynd up the locks the which hang scatterd light,
And in his waters, which your mirror make,
Behold your faces as the christall bright,
That when you come whereas my love doth lie,
No blemish she may spie.
And eke, ye lightfoot mayds, which keepe the dore,
That on the hoary mountayne used to towre;
And the wylde wolves, which seeks them to devoure,
With your steele darts doo chace from comming neer;
Be also present heere,
To helpe to decke her, and to help to sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Wake now, my love, awake! for it is time;
The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed,
All ready to her silver coche to clyme;
And Phœbus gins to shew his glorious hed.
Hark! how the cheerfull birds do chaunt theyr laies
And carroll of Loves praise.
The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft;
The Thrush replyes; the Mavis descant playes:
The Ouzell shrills; the Ruddock warbles soft;

LYRICAL POEMS

So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,
To this dayes merriment.
Ah! my deere love, why doe ye sleepe thus long,
When meeter were that ye should now awake,
T' awayt the comming of your joyous make,
And hearken to the birds love-learned song,
The deawy leaves among!
Nor they of joy and pleasance to you sing,
That all the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

My love is now awake out of her dreames,
And her fayre eyes, like stars that dimmed were
With darksome cloud, now shew theyr goodly beams
More bright then Hesperus his head doth rere.
Come now, ye damzels, daughters of delight,
Helpe quickly her to dight:
But first come ye fayre houres, which were begot,
In Joves sweet paradise of Day and Night;
Which doe the seasons of the yeare allot,
And al, that ever in this world is fayre,
Doe make and still repayre:
And ye three handmayds of the Cyprian Queene,
The which doe still adorne her beauties pride,
Helpe to addorne my beautifullest bride:
And, as ye her array, still throw betweene
Some graces to be seene;
And, as ye use to Venus, to her sing,
The whiles the woods shal answer, and your eccho ring.

Now is my love all ready forth to come:
Let all the virgins therefore well awayt:
And ye fresh boyes, that tend upon her groome,
Prepare your selves; for he is comming strayt.

Make: *mate*

LYRICAL POEMS

Set all your things in seemely good aray,
 Fit for so joyfull day:
 The joyfulst day that ever sunne did see.
 Faire Sun! shew forth thy favorable ray,
 And let thy lifull heat not fervent be,
 For feare of burning her sunshyny face,
 Her beauty to disgrace.
 O fayrest Phœbus! father of the Muse!
 If ever I did honor thee aright,
 Or sing the thing that mote thy mind delight,
 Doe not thy servants simple boone refuse;
 But let this day, let this one day, be myne;
 Let all the rest be thine.
 Then I thy soverayne prayses loud wil sing,
 That all the woods shal answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Harke! how the Minstrils gin to shrill aloud
 Their merry Musick that resounds from far,
 The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud,
 That well agree withouten breach or jar.
 But, most of all, the Damzels doe delite
 When they their tymbrels smyte,
 And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,
 That all the sences they doe ravish quite;
 The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,
 Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
 As if it were one voyce,
 Hymen, iö Hymen, Hymen, they do shout;
 That even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill
 Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill;
 To which the people standing all about,
 As in approvance, doe thereto applaud,
 And loud advaunce her laud;

Croud: *fiddle*
 Laud: *praise*

Lifull: *full of life*

Mote: *might*

LYRICAL POEMS

And evermore they Hymen, Hymen sing,
That al the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Loe! where she comes along with portly pace,
Lyke Phœbe, from her chamber of the East,
Arysing forth to run her mighty race,
Clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best.
So well it her beseemes, that ye would weene
Some angell she had beene.
Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,
Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres atweene,
Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre;
And, being crowned with a girland greene,
Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.
Her modest eyes, abashed to behold
So many gazers as on her do stare,
Upon the lowly ground affixed are;
Ne dare lift up her countenance too bold,
But blush to heare her prayses sung so loud,
So farre from being proud.
Nathlesse doe ye still loud her prayses sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Tell me, ye merchants daughters, did ye see
So fayre a creature in your towne before;
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,
Adornd with beautyes grace and vertues store?
Her goodly eyes lyke Saphyres shining bright,
Her forehead yvory white,
Her cheeks lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,
Her lips lyke cherries charming men to byte,

Beseemes: *becomes*
Nathlesse: *nevertheless*

Portly: *stately*
Rudded: *made ruddy*

Weene: *think*

LYRICAL POEMS

Her brest lyke to a bowle of creame uncrudded,
Her paps lyke lyllies budded,
Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre;
And all her body like a pallace fayre,
Ascending up, with many a stately stayre,
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.
Why stand ye still, ye virgins, in amaze,
Upon her so to gaze,
Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,
To which the woods did answer, and your eccho ring?

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright,
Garnisht with heavenly guifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red
Medusaes mazeful hed.
There dwels sweet love, and constant chastity,
Unspotted fayth, and comely womanhood,
Regard of honor, and mild modesty;
There vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne,
And giveth lawes alone,
The which the base affections doe obay,
And yeeld theyr services unto her will;
Ne thought of thing uncomely ever may
Thereto approch to tempt her mind to ill.
Had ye once seene these her celestial treasures,
And unrevealed pleasures,
Then would ye wonder, and her prayses sing,
That all the woods should answer, and your echo ring

Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in,

LYRICAL POEMS

And all the postes adorne as doth behove,
And all the pillours deck with girlands trim,
For to receyve this Saynt with honor dew,
That commeth in to you.
With trembling steps, and humble reverence,
She commeth in, before th' Almightyes view;
Of her ye virgins learne obedience,
When so ye come into those holy places,
To humble your proud faces:
Bring her up to th' high altar, that she may
The sacred ceremonies there partake,
The which do endlesse matrimony make;
And let the roring Organs loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes;
The whiles, with hollow throates,
The Choristers the joyous Antheme sing,
That all the woods may answer, and their eccho ring.

Behold, whiles she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes,
And blesseth her with his two happy hands,
How the red roses flush up in her cheekes,
And the pure snow, with goodly vermill stayne
Like crimsin dyde in grayne:
That even the Angeles, which continually
About the sacred Altare doe remaine,
Forget their service and about her fly,
Ofte peeping in her face, that seems more fayre,
The more they on it stare.
But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,
Are governed with goodly modesty,
That suffers not one looke to glaunce awry,
Which may let in a little thought unsownd.

Dyde in grayne: *dyed deeply*

Sad: *sober*

LYRICAL POEMS

Why blush ye, love, to give to me your hand,
The pledge of all our band!
Sing, ye sweet Angels, Alleluya sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Now al is done: bring home the bride again;
Bring home the triumph of our victory:
Bring home with you the glory of her gaine,
With joyance bring her and with jollity.
Never had man more joyfull day then this,
Whom heaven would heape with blis,
Make feast therefore now all this livelong day;
This day for ever to me holy is.
Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,
Poure not by cups, but by the belly full,
Poure out to all that wull,
And sprinkle all the postes and wals with wine,
That they may sweat, and drunken be withall.
Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,
And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine;
And let the Graces daunce unto the rest,
For they can do it best:
The whiles the maydens doe theyr carroll sing,
To which the woods shall answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Ring ye the bells, ye yong men of the towne,
And leave your wonted labors for this day:
This day is holy; doe ye write it downe,
That ye for ever it remember may.
This day the sunne is in his chiefest hight,
With Barnaby the bright,
From whence declining daily by degrees,
He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,
When once the Crab behind his back he sees.

LYRICAL POEMS

But for this time it ill ordained was,
To chose the longest day in all the yeare,
And shortest night, when longest fitter weare:
Yet never day so long, but late would passe.
Ring ye the bels, to make it weare away,
And bonefiers make all day;
And daunce about them, and about them sing,
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Ah! when will this long weary day have end,
And lende me leave to come unto my love?
How slowly do the houres theyr numbers spend?
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move?
Hast thee, O fayrest Planet, to thy home,
Within the Westernne fome:
Thy tyred steedes long since have need of rest.
Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,
And the bright evening-star with golden creast
Appeare out of the East.
Fayre childe of beauty! glorious lampe of love!
That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,
And guydest lovers through the nights sad dread,
How chearefully thou lookest from above,
And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light,
As joying in the sight
Of these glad many, which for joy doe sing,
That all the woods them answer, and their eccho ring!

Now ceasse, ye damsels, your delights fore-past:
Enough it is that all the day was youres:
Now day is doen, and night is nighing fast,
Now bring the Bryde into the brydall boures.
The night is come, now soon her disaray, .
And in her bed her lay;

LYRICAL POEMS

Lay her in lillies and in violets,
And silken courteins over her display,
And odord sheetes, and Arras coverlets.
Behold how goodly my faire love does ly,
In proud humility!
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her took
In Tempe, lying on the flowry gras,
Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was,
With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.
Now it is night, ye damsels may be gon,
And leave my love alone,
And leave likewise your former lay to sing:
The woods no more shall answer, nor your eccho ring.

Now welcome, night! thou night so long expected,
That long daies labor doest at last defray,
And all my cares, which cruell Love collected,
Hast sumd in one, and canceled for aye:
Spread thy broad wing over my love and me,
That no man may us see;
And in thy sable mantle us enwrap,
From feare of perrill and foule horror free.
Let no false treason seeke us to entrap,
Nor any dread disquiet once annoy
The safety of our joy;
But let the night be calme, and quiet some,
Without tempestuous storms or sad afray:
Lyke as when Jove with fayre Alcmena lay,
When he begot the great Tirynthian groome:
Or lyke as when he with thy selfe did lie
And begot Majesty.
And let the mayds and yongmen cease to sing;
Ne let the woods them answer nor theyr eccho ring.

LYRICAL POEMS

Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull teares,
Be heard all night within, nor yet without:
Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden feares,
Breake gentle sleepe with misconceived dout.
Let no deluding dreames, nor dreadful sights,
Make sudden sad affrights;
Ne let house-fyres, nor lightnings helpelesse harmes,
Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights,
Ne let mischivous witches with theyr charmes,
Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,
Fray us with things that be not:
Let not the shrieck Oule nor the Storke be heard,
Nor the night Raven, that still deadly yels;
Nor damned ghosts, cald up with mighty spels,
Nor griesly vultures, make us once affeard:
Ne let the unpleasant Quyre of Frogs still croking
Make us to wish theyr choking.
Let none of these theyr drery accents sing;
Ne let the woods them answer, nor theyr eccho ring.

But let stil Silence trew night-watches keepe,
That sacred Peace may in assurance rayne,
And tymely Sleep, when it is tyme to sleepe,
May poure his limbs forth on your pleasant playne;
The whiles an hundred little winged loves,
Like divers-fethered doves,
Shall fly and flutter round about your bed,
And in the secret darke, that none reproves,
Their prety stealthes shal worke, and snares shal spread
To filch away sweet snatches of delight,
Conceald through covert night.
Ye sonnes of Venus, play your sports at will!
For greedy pleasure, carelesse of your toyes,
Thinks more upon her paradise of joyes,

LYRICAL POEMS

Then what ye do, albe it good or ill.
All night therefore attend your merry play,
For it will soone be day:
Now none doth hinder you, that say or sing;
Ne will the woods now answer, nor your eccho ring.

Who is the same, which at my window peepes?
Or whose is that faire face that shines so bright?
Is it not Cinthia, she that never sleepes,
But walkes about high heaven al the night?
O! fayrest goddesse, do thou not envy
My love with me to spy:
For thou likewise didst love, though now unthought,
And for a fleece of wooll, which privily
The Latmian shepherd once unto thee brought,
His pleasures with thee wrought.
Therefore to us be favorable now;
And sith of wemens labors thou hast charge,
And generation goodly dost enlarge,
Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,
And the chast wombe informe with timely seed,
That may our comfort breed:
Till which we cease our hopefull hap to sing;
Ne let the woods us answer, nor our eccho ring.

And thou, great Juno! which with awful might
The lawes of wedlock still dost patronize;
And the religion of the faith first plight
With sacred rites hast taught to solemnize;
And eeke for comfort often called art
Of women in their smart;

Smart: *pain*

LYRICAL POEMS

Eternally bind thou this lovely band,
And all thy blessings unto us impart.
And thou, glad Genius! in whose gentle hand
The bridale bowre and geniall bed remaine,
Without blemish or staine;
And the sweet pleasures of theyr loves delight
With secret ayde doest succor and supply,
Till they bring forth the fruitfull progeny;
Send us the timely fruit of this same night.
And thou, fayre Hebe! and thou, Hymen free!
Grant that it may so be.
Til which we cease your further prayse to sing;
Ne any woods shall answer, nor your echo ring.

And ye high heavens, the temple of the gods,
In which a thousand torches flaming bright
Doc burne, that to us wretched earthly clods
In dreadful darknesse lend desired light;
And all ye powers which in the same remayne,
More then we men can fayne!
Poure out your blessing on us plentiously,
And happy influence upon us raine,
That we may raise a large posterity,
Which from the earth, which they may long possesse
With lasting happinesse,
Up to your haughty pallaces may mount;
And, for the guerdon of theyr glorious merit,
May heavenly tabernacles there inherit,
Of blessed Saints for to increase the count.
So let us rest, sweet love, in hope of this,
And cease till then our tymely joyes to sing:
The woods no more us answer, nor our eccho ring!

Geniall: *generative*

LYRICAL POEMS

*Song! made in lieu of many ornaments,
With which my love should duly have been deckt,
Which cutting off through hasty accidents,
Ye would not stay your dew time to expect,
But promist both to recompens;
Be unto her a goodly ornament,
And for short time an endlesse moniment.*

Edmund Spenser

137 SEPHESTIA'S SONG TO HER CHILD

WEEP not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy;
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by him and me,
He was glad, I was woe;
Fortune changed made him so,
When he left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Streaming tears that never stint,
Like pearl drops from a flint,
Fell by course from his eyes,
That one another's place supplies;
Thus he grieved in every part,
Tears of blood fell from his heart,
When he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

LYRICAL POEMS

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

The wanton smiled, father wept,
Mother cried, baby leapt;
More he crowed, more he cried,
Nature could not sorrow hide:
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bless,
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Robert Greene

138

THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

WE walked along, while bright and red
Uprose the morning sun;
And Matthew stopped, he looked, and said,
"The will of God be done!"

A village schoolmaster was he,
With hair of glittering gray;
As blithe a man as you could see
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass
And by the steaming rills,
We traveled merrily, to pass
A day among the hills.

"Our work," said I, "was well begun;
Then, from thy breast what thought,
Beneath so beautiful a sun,
So sad a sigh has brought?"

LYRICAL POEMS

A second time did Matthew stop;
And fixing still his eye
Upon the eastern mountain top,
'To me he made reply:

"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this, which I have left
Full thirty years behind.

"And just above yon slope of corn
Such colors, and no other,
Were in the sky, that April morn,
Of this the very brother.

"With rod and line I sued the sport
Which that sweet season gave,
And, to the churchyard come, stopped short
Beside my daughter's grave.

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale;
And then she sang;—she would have been
A very nightingale.

"Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more—
For so it seemed—than till that day
I e'er had loved before.

"And turning from her grave, I met
Beside the churchyard yew
A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

LYRICAL POEMS

“A basket on her head she bare;
Her brow was smooth and white:
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

“No fountain from its rocky cave
E’er tripped with foot so free;
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.

“There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again:
And did not wish her mine!”

—Matthew is in his grave, yet now
Methinks I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand.

William Wordsworth

139

SURPRISED by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss?—That thought’s return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,

LYRICAL POEMS

Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

William Wordsworth

140

TO MARY¹

THE twentieth year is well-nigh past
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow—
"Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfill
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

¹ Mrs. Mary Unwin, in whose home the poet, who was of infirm health, spent a great part of his life.

LYRICAL POEMS

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet, gently pressed, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st
That now at every step thou mov'st
Upheld by two; yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary!

And still to love, though pressed with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

LYRICAL POEMS

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last—
My Mary!

William Cowper

141

TO THOMAS MOORE

MY boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea;
But before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

Here's a sigh to those who love me,
And a smile to those who hate;
And, whatever sky's above me,
Here's a heart for every fate!

Though the ocean roar around me,
Yet it still shall bear me on;
Though a desert should surround me,
It hath springs that may be won.

Were't the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'Tis to thee that I would drink.

With that water, as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be,—Peace with thine and mine,
And a health to thee, Tom Moore.

Lord Byron

142

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO

JOHN ANDERSON my jo, John,
 When we were first acquent
 Your locks were like the raven,
 Your bonnie brow was brent;
 But now your brow is beld, John,
 Your locks are like the snow;
 But blessings on your frosty pow,
 John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
 We clamb the hill thegither,
 And mony a canty day, John,
 We've had wi' ane anither:
 Now we maun totter down, John,
 But hand in hand we'll go,
 And sleep thegither at the foot,
 John Anderson my jo.

Robert Burns

143

STRANGERS YET

STRANGERS yet!
 After years of life together,
 After fair and stormy weather,
 After travel in far lands,
 After touch of wedded hands,—
 Why thus joined? Why ever met,
 If they must be strangers yet?

Beld: *bald*
 Brent: *unwrinkled*

Canty: *merry*
 Jo: *sweetheart, dear*

Pow: *head*

LYRICAL POEMS

Strangers yet!

After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel asked and wisdom given,
After mutual prayers to Heaven,
Child and parent scarce regret
When they part—are strangers yet.

Strangers yet!

After strife for common ends—
After title of "old friends,"
After passions fierce and tender,
After cheerful self-surrender,
Hearts may beat and eyes be met,
And the souls be strangers yet.

Strangers yet!

Oh! the bitter thought to scan
All the loneliness of man:—
Nature, by magnetic laws,
Circle unto circle draws,
But they only touch when met,
Never mingle—strangers yet.

Lord Houghton

144

ISOLATION: TO MARGUERITE

I

WE were apart; yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;

LYRICAL POEMS

Nor feared but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learned—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturned.
Self-swayed our feelings ebb and swell—
Thou lov'st no more;—Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell!—and thou, thou lonely heart,
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spherèd course
To haunt the place where passions reign—
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.
But thou hast long had place to prove
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:
“Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.”

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean and clouds and night and day;

LYRICAL POEMS

Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *dreamed* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolonged; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

II

YES! in the sea of life enisled,
I With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh, might our margins meet again!

LYRICAL POEMS

Who ordered, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?
Who renders vain their deep desire? —
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.

Matthew Arnold

145

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

Alfred Tennyson

146

BREAK, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Alfred Tennyson

147

YOUTH AND AGE

VERSE, a breeze 'mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—
Both were mine! Life went a-maying
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
When I was young!

When I was young?—Ah, woeful When!
Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
This breathing house not built with hands,

LYRICAL POEMS

This body that does me grievous wrong,
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands
How lightly then it flashed along:
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
On winding lakes and rivers wide,
That ask no aid of sail or oar,
That fear no spite of wind or tide!
Nought cared this body for wind or weather
When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
Friendship is a sheltering tree;
O! the joys, that came down shower-like,
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah woeful Ere,
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
O Youth! for years so many and sweet
'Tis known that Thou and I were one,
I'll think it but a fond conceit—
It cannot be that thou art gone!
Thy vesper bell hath not yet tolled:—
And thou wert aye a masker bold!
What strange disguise hast now put on
To make believe that thou art gone?
I see these locks in silvery slips,
This drooping gait, this altered size:
But Springtide blossoms on thy lips,
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are housemates still.

LYRICAL POEMS

Dewdrops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve!
Where no hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,
When we are old:

—That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave,
Like some poor nigh-related guest
That may not rudely be dismiss,
Yet hath outstayed his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

148

C'RABBÈD Age and Youth
Cannot live together:

Youth is full of pleasance,
Age is full of care;

Youth like summer morn,
Age like winter weather,

Youth like summer brave,
Age like winter bare:

Youth is full of sport,
Age's breath is short,
Youth is nimble, Age is lame:

Youth is hot and bold,
Age is weak and cold,
Youth is wild, and Age is tame:—

Age, I do abhor thee,
Youth, I do adore thee;

LYRICAL POEMS

O! my Love, my Love is young!
Age, I do defy thee—
O sweet shepherd, hie thee,
For methinks thou stay'st too long.

William Shakespeare

149

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by:
—This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

William Shakespeare

150

O FOR my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
Pity me then and wish I were renewed;
Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection;

Eisel: *vinegar*

LYRICAL POEMS

No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance, to correct correction.
Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.

William Shakespeare

151

WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste;
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long-since-canceled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before:
—But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

William Shakespeare

152

LIKE as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.

Expense: *loss*

LYRICAL POEMS

Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow;
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

William Shakespeare

153

SINCE brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout
Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
O fearful meditation! where, alack!
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O! none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

William Shakespeare

154

OZYMANDIAS OF EGYPT

I MET a traveler from an antique land
Who said: 'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Spoil: *destruction*

LYRICAL POEMS

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
“My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

155

FEAR no more the heat o' the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The scepter, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust,

Fear no more the lightning-flash
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan;
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

William Shakespeare

LYRICAL POEMS

156

SOLDIER, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more;
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armor's clang, or war-steed champing,
Trump nor pibroch summon here
Mustering clan or squadron tramping.
Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here,
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans or squadrons stamping.

Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
Dream not, with the rising sun,
Bugles here shall sound reveillé.

LYRICAL POEMS

Sleep! the deer is in his den;
Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying:
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen
How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye
Here no bugles sound reveillé.

Sir Walter Scott

157

HUNTING SONG

WAKEN, lords and ladies gay!
On the mountain dawns the day;
All the jolly chase is here
With hawk and horse and hunting-spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily merrily mingle they,
“Waken, lords and ladies gay!”

Waken, lords and ladies gay!
The mist has left the mountain gray,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay,
“Waken, lords and ladies gay!”

Waken, lords and ladies gay!
To the greenwood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot and tall of size;

LYRICAL POEMS

We can show the marks he made
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay;
“Waken, lords and ladies gay!”

Louder, louder chant the lay,
Waken, lords and ladies gay!
Tell them youth and mirth and glee
Run a course as well as we;
Time, stern huntsman! who can balk,
Stanch as hound and fleet as hawk;
Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay!

Sir Walter Scott

158

WHEN I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain;
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

Christina Rossetti

LYRICAL POEMS

159

REMEMBER

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more, day by day,
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti

160

THE CITY IN THE SEA

LO! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim west,
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the
best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

LYRICAL POEMS

No rays from the holy heaven come down
On the long nighttime of that town;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently—
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—
Up many and many a marvelous shrine
Whose wreathèd friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves,
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye—
Not the gayly-jeweled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass—
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea—
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.
But lo, a stir is in the air!

LYRICAL POEMS

The wave—there is a movement there!
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow—
The hours are breathing faint and low—
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.

Edgar Allan Poe

161

A CAROL OF DEATH¹

COME lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

Praised be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come
unfalteringly.

¹ From the poem *When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloomed*.

LYRICAL POEMS

Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing
 the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and
 feastings for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky
 are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice
 I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veiled death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and
 the prairies wide,
Over the dense-packed cities all and the teeming wharves
 and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.

Walt Whitman

162

THE TROSACHS

THERE'S not a nook within this solemn Pass,
 But were an apt confessional for One
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,
That Life is but a tale of morning grass

LYRICAL POEMS

Withered at eve. From scenes of art which chase
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon. Thrice happy quest,
If from a golden perch of aspen spray
(October's workmanship to rival May)
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay,
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest!

William Wordsworth

163 UPON THE SIGHT OF A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE

PRAISED be the Art whose subtle power could stay
Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day;
Which stopped that band of travelers on their way,
Ere they were lost within the shady wood;
And showed the Bark upon the glassy flood
For ever anchored in her sheltering bay.
Soul-soothing Art! whom Morning, Noontide, Even,
Do serve with all their changeful pageantry;
Thou, with ambition modest yet sublime,
Here, for the sight of mortal man, hast given
To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest eternity.

William Wordsworth

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

THOU still unravished bride of quietness,
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
 For ever panting, and for ever young;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

LYRICAL POEMS

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens over wrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

John Keats

165

ART¹

ALL things are doubly fair
If patience fashion them
And care—
Verse, enamel, marble, gem.

No idle chains endure:
Yet, Muse, to walk aright,
Lace tight
Thy buskin proud and sure.

¹ The translation is by George Santayana, and is reprinted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

LYRICAL POEMS

Fie on a facile measure,
A shoe where every lout
 At pleasure
Slips his foot in and out!

Sculptor, lay by the clay
On which thy nerveless finger
 May linger,
Thy thoughts flown far away.

Keep to Carrara rare,
Struggle with Paros cold,
 That hold
The subtle line and fair.

Lest haply nature lose
That proud, that perfect line,
 Make thine
The bronze of Syracuse.

And with a tender dread
Upon an agate's face
 Retrace
Apollo's golden head.

Despise a watery hue
And tints that soon expire.
 With fire
Burn thine enamel true.

Twine, twine in artful wise
The blue-green mermaid's arms,
 Mid charms
Of thousand heraldries.

LYRICAL POEMS

Show in their triple lobe
Virgin and Child, that hold
 Their globe,
Cross-crowned and aureoled.

—All things return to dust
Save beauties fashioned well.
 The bust
Outlasts the citadel.

Oft doth the plowman's heel,
Breaking an ancient clod,
 Reveal
A Cæsar or a god.

The gods, too, die, alas!
But deathless and more strong
 Than brass
Remains the sovereign song.

Chisel and carve and file,
Till thy vague dream imprint
 Its smile
On the unyielding flint.

Théophile Gautier

166

LOST DAYS

THE lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?

LYRICAL POEMS

Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?
I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
“I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?”
“And I—and I—thyself” (lo! each one saith),
“And thou thyself to all eternity!”

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

167

THE PRODIGALS¹

“**P**RINCES!—and you, most valorous,
Nobles and Barons of all degrees!
Hearken awhile to the prayer of us,—
Beggars that come from the over-seas!
Nothing we ask or of gold or fees;
Harry us not with the hounds, we pray;
Lo,—for the surcote’s hem we seize,—
Give us—ah! give us—but Yesterday!”

“Dames most delicate, amorous!
Damosels blithe as the belted bees!
Hearken awhile to the prayer of us,—
Beggars that come from the over-seas!
Nothing we ask of the things that please;
Weary are we, and worn, and gray;
Lo,—for we clutch and we clasp your knees,—
Give us—ah! give us—but Yesterday!”

¹ Reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Alban Dobson and with the Oxford University Press.

LYRICAL POEMS

“Damosels—Dames, be piteous!”

(But the dames rode fast by the roadway trees.)

“Hear us, O Knights magnanimous!”

(But the knights pricked on in their panoplies.)

Nothing they gat or of hope or ease,
But only to beat on the breast and say:—

“Life we drank to the dregs and lees;
Give us—ah! give us—but Yesterday!”

ENVOY

Youth, take heed to the prayer of these!
Many there be by the dusty way,—

Many that cry to the rocks and seas:—
“Give us—ah! give us—but Yesterday!”

Austin Dobson

168

DAYS

DAUGHTERS of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

LYRICAL POEMS

169

TO MR. LAWRENCE

LAWRENCE, of virtuous father virtuous son.
 Now that the fields are dank and ways are mire,
 Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
 Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
 From the hard season gaining? Time will run
 On smoother, till Favonius reinspire
 The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
 The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.
 What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
 Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
 To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
 Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air!
 He who of those delights can judge, and spare
 To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

John Milton

170

CYRIACK, whose grandsire, on the royal bench
 Of British Themis, with no mean applause
 Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
 Which others at their bar so often wrench;
 To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
 In mirth, that after no repenting draws;
 Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
 And what the Swede intend, and what the French.
 To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
 Toward solid good what leads the nearest way;
 For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
 And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
 That with superfluous burden loads the day,
 And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

John Milton

FANCY

EVER let the Fancy roam!
 Pleasure never is at home:
 At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
 Then let wingèd Fancy wander
 Through the thought still spread beyond her:
 Open wide the mind's cage-door,
 She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
 O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
 Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
 And the enjoying of the Spring
 Fades as does its blossoming:
 Autumn's red-lipped fruitage too,
 Blushing through the mist and dew,
 Cloys with tasting: What do then?
 Sit thee by the ingle, when
 The sear fagot blazes bright,
 Spirit of a winter's night;
 When the soundless earth is muffled,
 And the cakèd snow is shuffled
 From the plowboy's heavy shoon;
 When the Night doth meet the Noon
 In a dark conspiracy
 To banish Even from her sky.
 —Sit thee there, and send abroad,
 With a mind self-overawed,
 Fancy, high-commissioned:—send her!
 She has vassals to attend her;
 She will bring, in spite of frost,
 Beauties that the earth hath lost;
 She will bring thee, all together,
 All delights of summer weather;

LYRICAL POEMS

All the buds and bells of May
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heapèd Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth;
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it;—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reapèd corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plumed lilies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the Mid-May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearlèd with the selfsame shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meager from its cellèd sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering
While the autumn breezes sing.

LYRICAL POEMS

O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Everything is spoilt by use:
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gazed at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let then wingèd Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind:
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash;
Quickly break her prison-string,
And such joys as these she'll bring.
—Let the wingèd Fancy roam!
Pleasure never is at home.

John Keats

LYRICAL POEMS

172

KUBLA KHAN

OR, A VISION IN A DREAM. A FRAGMENT¹

IN Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;

¹ The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron], and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits.

In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage*: "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter! . . .

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the Author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. Ἀῤῥιον ἁδιον ἄσῶ [A sweeter (song) will I sing to-morrow]: but the to-morrow is yet to come.

[From the author's introductory note.]

LYRICAL POEMS

And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,

LYRICAL POEMS

Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

173

THE HAUNTED PALACE

I N the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion—
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair!

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow
(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago),
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A wingèd odor went away.

LYRICAL POEMS

Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tuned law,
Round about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene! ¹),
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate.
(Ah, let us mourn!—for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate!)

And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travelers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms, that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,

¹ "Born to the purple," or "of royal race"—apparently intended to be associated, as an epithet, with "ruler," below.

LYRICAL POEMS

While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh—but smile no more.

Edgar Allan Poe

174

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river?

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river,
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god can
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan
(How tall it stood in the river!),
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes as he sat by the river.

LYRICAL POEMS

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan
 (Laughed while he sat by the river),
"The only way since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
 He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
 Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
 Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan
 To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain—
For the reed which grows never more again
 As a reed with the reeds in the river.¹

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

175

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound
 I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.

¹ With the theme of this poem may be compared the simile of the pelican in *The May Night* of Alfred de Musset.

LYRICAL POEMS

This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air;
But if I did it, as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

176 ALEXANDER'S FEAST; OR, THE POWER OF MUSIC

'T WAS at the royal feast for Persia won
By Philip's warlike son—
Aloft in awful state
The godlike hero sate
On his imperial throne;
His valiant peers were placed around,
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound
(So should desert in arms be crowned);
The lovely Thais by his side
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride
In flower of youth and beauty's pride:—
Happy, happy, happy pair!
None but the brave,
None but the brave,
None but the brave deserves the fair!

Timotheus, placed on high
Amid the tuncful quire,
With flying fingers touched the lyre:
The trembling notes ascend the sky
And heavenly joys inspire.
The song began from Jove,
Who left his blissful seats above—

LYRICAL POEMS

Such is the power of mighty love!
A dragon's fiery form belied the god;
Sublime on radiant spires he rode
When he to fair Olympia prest,
And while he sought her snowy breast,
Then round her slender waist he curled,
And stamped an image of himself, a sovereign of the world.
—The listening crowd admire the lofty sound;
A present deity! they shout around:
A present deity! the vaulted roofs rebound:
With ravished ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

The praise of Bacchus then the sweet musician sung,
Of Bacchus ever fair and ever young:
The jolly god in triumph comes!
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums!
Flushed with a purple grace
He shows his honest face:
Now give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes!
Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure:
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain.

Soothed with the sound, the king grew vain;
Fought all his battles o'er again,
And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain.

LYRICAL POEMS

The master saw the madness rise,
His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes;
And, while he Heaven and Earth defied,
Changed his hand and checked his pride.

He chose a mournful Muse
Soft pity to infuse:
He sung Darius great and good,
By too severe a fate
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,
Fallen from his high estate,
And weltering in his blood;
Deserted, at his utmost need,
By those his former bounty fed;
On the bare earth exposed he lies
With not a friend to close his eyes.
—With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,
Revolving in his altered soul
The various turns of Chance below;
And now and then a sigh he stole,
And tears began to flow.

The mighty master smiled to see
That love was in the next degree;
'Twas but a kindred-sound to move,
For pity melts the mind to love.
Softly sweet, in Lydian measures
Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.
War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
Honor but an empty bubble;
Never ending, still beginning,
Fighting still, and still destroying,
If the world be worth thy winning,
Think, O think, it worth enjoying:
Lovely Thais sits beside thee,

LYRICAL POEMS

Take the good the gods provide thee!
—The many rend the skies with loud applause;
So Love was crowned, but Music won the cause.
The prince, unable to conceal his pain,
 Gazed on the fair
 Who caused his care,
And sighed and looked, sighed and looked,
Sighed and looked, and sighed again:
At length, with love and wine at once opprest,
The vanquished victor sunk upon her breast.

Now strike the golden lyre again:
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain!
Break his bands of sleep asunder
And rouse him like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark! the horrid sound
 Has raised up his head:
 As awaked from the dead
And amazed he stares around.
Revenge, revenge, Timotheus cries,
See the Furies arise!
 See the snakes that they rear,
 How they hiss in their hair,
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!
 Behold a ghastly band,
 Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain
 And unburied remain
 Inglorious on the plain:
 Give the vengeance due
 To the valiant crew!
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.

LYRICAL POEMS

—The princes applaud with a furious joy:
And the King seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
 Thais led the way
 To light him to his prey,
And like another Helen, fired another Troy!

—Thus, long ago,
Ere heaving bellows learned to blow,
 While organs yet were mute,
 Timotheus, to his breathing flute
 And sounding lyre,
Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.
At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame;
The sweet enthusiast from her sacred store
 Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
 And added length to solemn sounds,
With Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
—Let old Timotheus yield the prize
 Or both divide the crown;
He raised a mortal to the skies;
 She drew an angel down!

John Dryden

177

PERSONAL TALK

I AM not One who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk—
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbors, daily, weekly, in my sight:
And, for my chance-acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like Forms with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors, for one feast-night.

LYRICAL POEMS

Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

“**Y**ET life,” you say, “is life; we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe.”
Even be it so; yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world’s true Worldlings, rank not me!
Children are blest, and powerful; their world lies
More justly balanced; partly at their feet,
And part far from them: sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet;
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a Slave; the meanest we can meet!

WINGS have we,—and as far as we can go,
We may find pleasure: wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.
Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good:
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble I am,

LYRICAL POEMS

To which I listen with a ready ear;
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear,—
The gentle Lady married to the Moor;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

NOR can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancor, never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought:
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbor, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them—and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares—
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

William Wordsworth

178

MOST sweet it is with unuplifted eyes
To pace the ground, if path be there or none,
While a fair region round the traveler lies
Which he forbears again to look upon;
Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,
The work of Fancy, or some happy tone
Of meditation, slipping in between
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.
If Thought and Love desert us, from that day
Let us break off all commerce with the Muse:

LYRICAL POEMS

With Thought and Love companions of our way—
Whate'er the senses take or may refuse—
The Mind's internal heaven shall shed her dews
Of inspiration on the humblest lay.

William Wordsworth

179 WITHIN KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE

TAX not the royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned
(Albeit laboring for a scanty band
Of white-robed Scholars only) this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence!

Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more:
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loath to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

William Wordsworth

180 THE SCHOLAR

MY days among the Dead are past;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old:
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

LYRICAL POEMS

With them I take delight in weal
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all Futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

Robert Southey

181

THE ANGLER'S WISH

I IN these flowery meads would be,
These crystal streams should solace me;
To whose harmonious bubbling noise
I, with my angle, would rejoice,
Sit here, and see the turtle-dove
Court his chaste mate to acts of love;

Or, on that bank, feel the west wind
Breathe health and plenty; please my mind,

LYRICAL POEMS

To see sweet dewdrops kiss these flowers,
And then washed off by April showers;
Here, hear my kenna sing a song:
There, see a blackbird feed her young,

Or a laverock build her nest;
Here, give my weary spirits rest,
And raise my low-pitched thoughts above
Earth, or what poor mortals love.
Thus, free from lawsuits, and the noise
Of princes' courts, I would rejoice;

Or, with my Bryan and a book,
Loiter long days near Shawford brook;
There sit by him, and eat my meat;
There see the sun both rise and set;
There bid good morning to next day;
There meditate my time away;
And angle on; and beg to have
A quiet passage to a welcome grave.

Izaak Walton

182

THE QUIET LIFE¹

HAPPY the man whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground;

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire;
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

¹ Said by the author to have been written when he was about twelve years old.

LYRICAL POEMS

Blest, who can unconcernedly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mixed; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

Alexander Pope

183

TO SLEEP

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I have thought of all by turns, and yet do lie
Sleepless; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees,
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:
So do not let me wear to-night away:
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessèd barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

William Wordsworth

LYRICAL POEMS

184

A PÆAN¹

THE year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

Robert Browning

185

A DIRGE

ROUGH wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main,
Wail, for the world's wrong!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

186 ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT²

AVENGE, O Lord! Thy slaughtered Saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,

¹ Sung by "a girl, Pippa, from the silk mills," in *Pippa Passes*, a drama.

² The massacre, in 1655, of the Vaudois, or Waldenses, a Christian community living amid the high Alps of Piedmont, in the northwestern part of Italy. This "pious, inoffensive people: dear to the hearts and imaginations of all Protestant men" (Carlyle) was in the past repeatedly subjected to persecution because of its refusal to unite with the Roman Catholic Church—the "triple tyrant" of the poem.

LYRICAL POEMS

Forget not: in Thy book record their groans
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant: that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt Thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

John Milton

187 ON THE TURKISH MASSACRE OF ARME- NIANS IN 1895¹

WHAT profits it, O England, to prevail
In arts and arms, and mighty realms subdue,
And ocean with thine argosies bestrew,
And wrest thy tribute from each golden gale,
If idly thou must harken to the wail
Of women martyred by the turbaned crew
Whose tenderest mercy was the sword that slew,
And hazard not the denting of thy mail?
We deemed of old thou held'st a charge from Him
Who sits companioned by His seraphim,
To smite the wronger with thy destined rod.
Wait'st thou His sign? Enough, the unanswered cry
Of virgin souls for vengeance, and on high
The gathering blackness of the frown of God!

William Watson

¹ Reprinted through special arrangement with Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

188 ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN
REPUBLIC¹

ONCE did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
 And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
 Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
 Venice, the eldest child of Liberty.
 She was a maiden city, bright and free;
 No guile seduced, no force could violate;
 And, when she took unto herself a Mate,
 She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
 And what if she had seen those glories fade,
 Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
 Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
 When her long life hath reached its final day:
 Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
 Of that which once was great is passed away.

William Wordsworth

¹ By Napoleon, in 1797. Parts of the sonnet are illustrated by the following extract from a letter dated July 1, 1621: "These wishes come to you from Venice, a place where there is nothing wanting that heart can wish; renowned Venice, the admired'st city in the world, a city that all Europe is bound unto, for she is her greatest rampart against that huge Eastern tyrant, the Turk, by sea; else, I believe, he had overrun all Christendom by this time. Against him this city hath performed notable exploits, and not only against him, but divers others; she hath restored emperors to their thrones, and popes to their chairs, and with her galleys often preserved St. Peter's bark from sinking; for which, by way of reward, one of his successors espoused her to the sea, which marriage is solemnly renewed every year in solemn procession by the Doge and all the Clarissimos, and a gold ring cast into the sea out of the great Galeasse, called the Bucentoro, wherein the first ceremony was performed by the pope himself, above three hundred years since, and they say it is the self-same vessel still, though often put upon careen, and trimmed" (James Howell to Dr. Francis Mansell).

189 THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND¹

TWO voices are there; one is of the sea,
 One of the mountains; each a mighty voice:
 In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
 They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
 There came a tyrant, and with holy glee
 Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven:
 Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
 Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
 Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft:
 Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;
 For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
 That mountain floods should thunder as before,
 And ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
 And neither awful voice be heard by thee.

William Wordsworth

190 TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE²

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men!
 Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plow
 Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
 Pillowed in some deep dungeon's careless den;—
 O miserable Chieftain! where and when
 Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
 Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:

¹ By the French, in 1798.

² A negro, born a slave in San Domingo. He acquired an education, took part in the disturbances beginning with an insurrection of blacks in 1791, and ten years later had made himself master of the island—at the time a titular French possession. Napoleon determined to assert French supremacy. Fierce warfare ensued. In the end L'Ouverture was treacherously seized and conveyed to France, where he died in a prison on April 27, 1803. Wordsworth's sonnet was written in August, 1802.

LYRICAL POEMS

Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies!
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

William Wordsworth

191

IT is not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands
Should perish; and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armory of the invincible Knights of old:
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

William Wordsworth

192¹

ANOTHER year!—another deadly blow!
Another mighty Empire overthrown!
And we are left, or shall be left, alone;
The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.

¹ Dated November, 1806. Occasioned by Napoleon's victory at Jena and the consequent downfall of Prussia. French troops entered Berlin on October 26.

LYRICAL POEMS

'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought;
That by our own right hands it must be wrought;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!
We shall exult, if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, upright, valiant; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honor which they do not understand.

William Wordsworth

193

I GRIEVED for Buonaparté, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood
Of that Man's mind—what can it be? what food
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
The Governor who must be wise and good,
And temper with the sternness of the brain
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

William Wordsworth

LYRICAL POEMS

194¹

O FRIEND! I know not which way I must look
 For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
 To think that now our life is only drest
 For show; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
 Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
 The wealthiest man among us is the best:
 No grandeur now in Nature or in book
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
 This is idolatry; and these we adore:
 Plain living and high thinking are no more:
 The homely beauty of the good old cause
 Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
 And pure religion breathing household laws.

William Wordsworth

195

THE world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
 This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
 The winds that will be howling at all hours
 And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
 It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

William Wordsworth

¹ Dated London, 1802.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a ribband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others she lets us devote;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed:
 How all our copper had gone for his service!
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
 Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
 There would be doubt, hesitation, and pain,
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again!

LYRICAL POEMS

Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

Robert Browning

197 HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest died
away;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest Northeast distance, dawned Gibraltar grand
and gray;

“Here and here did England help me:¹ how can I help Eng-
land?”—say,

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove’s planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

Robert Browning

198 SONG OF A GREEK POET

(GREECE BEING STILL UNDER TURKISH DOMINATION)

THE isles of Greece, the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,—
Where grew the arts of war and peace,—
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet;
But all, except their sun, is set.

¹ The Battle of Trafalgar, won by the British fleet under Lord Nelson, secured England against invasion by Napoleon. The rock of Gibraltar, since it became an English possession, has defied several sieges, notably that of 1779-1783.

LYRICAL POEMS

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo farther west
Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."

The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For, standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sat on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships by thousands lay below,
And men in nations,—all were his!
He counted them at break of day,—
And when the sun set, where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now,—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Grecks a blush,—for Greece a tear.

LYRICAL POEMS

Must we but weep o'er days more blest?

Must we but blush?—our fathers bled.

Earth! render back from out thy breast

A remnant of our Spartan dead!

Of the three hundred, grant but three

To make a new Thermopylæ!

What, silent still? and silent all?

Ah no! the voices of the dead

Sound like a distant torrent's fall,

And answer, "Let one living head,

But one, arise,—we come, we come!"

'Tis but the living who are dumb.

In vain,—in vain; strike other chords;

Fill high the cup with Samian wine!

Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,

And shed the blood of Scio's vine!

Hark! rising to the ignoble call,

How answers each bold Bacchanal!

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,

Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?

Of two such lessons, why forget

The nobler and the manlier one?

You have the letters Cadmus gave,—

Think ye he meant them for a slave?

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

We will not think of themes like these!

It made Anacreon's song divine;

He served, but served Polycrates,—

A tyrant; but our masters then

Were still, at least, our countrymen.

LYRICAL POEMS

The tyrant of the Chersonese
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!

O that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

On Suli's rock and Parga's shore
Exists the remnant of a line

Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there perhaps some seed is sown
The Heracleidan blood might own.

Trust not for freedom to the Franks,—

They have a king who buys and sells.
In native swords and native ranks

The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force and Latin fraud
Would break your shield, however broad.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

Our virgins dance beneath the shade,—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;

But, gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,

Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;

There, swan-like, let me sing and die.
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine,—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

Lord Byron

LYRICAL POEMS

199

A CHORUS FROM FAUST¹

SUNG BY THREE ARCHANGELS, BEFORE THE LORD AND
THE HOST OF HEAVEN

RAPHAEL

THE sun makes music as of old
Amid the rival spheres of Heaven,
On its predestined circle rolled
With thunder speed: the Angels even
Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
Though none its meaning fathom may:—
The world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at Creation's day.

GABRIEL

And swift and swift, with rapid lightness,
The adorned Earth spins silently,
Alternating Elysian brightness
With deep and dreadful night; the sea
Foams in broad billows from the deep
Up to the rocks, and rocks and Ocean,
Onward, with spheres which never sleep,
Are hurried in eternal motion.

MICHAEL

And tempests in contention roar
From land to sea, from sea to land,
And, raging, weave a chain of power,
Which girds the earth, as with a band.—

¹ Translated by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

LYRICAL POEMS

A flashing desolation there
Flames before the thunder's way;
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle changes of Thy day.

CHORUS OF THE THREE

The Angels draw strength from Thy glance,
Though no one comprehend Thee may;—
Thy world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as on Creation's day.

Goethe

200

TO EVENING

IF aught of oaten stop or pastoral song
May hope, O pensive Eve, to soothe thine ear,
Like thy own brawling springs,
Thy springs, and dying gales;

O Nymph reserved,—while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed;

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing;
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path,
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum,—
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,

LYRICAL POEMS

Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
May not unseemly with its stillness suit;
 As musing slow I hail
 Thy genial loved return.

For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
 The fragrant Hours, and Elves
 Who slept in buds the day,

And many a Nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
 The pensive Pleasures sweet,
 Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene;
Or find some ruin 'midst its dreary dells,
 Whose walls more awful nod
 By thy religious gleams.

Or, if chill blustering winds or driving rain
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut
 That, from the mountain's side,
 Views wilds, and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires;
And hears their simple bell; and marks o'er all
 Thy dewy fingers draw
 The gradual dusky veil.

While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve!
 While Summer loves to sport
 Beneath thy lingering light;

LYRICAL POEMS

While fallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves;
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train
And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, smiling Peace,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And love thy favorite name!

William Collins

201

TO NIGHT

MYSTERIOUS NIGHT! when our first parent knew
Thee, from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,—
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet, 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,
And lo! creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?

Blanco White

TO NIGHT

SWIFTLY walk over the western wave,
 Spirit of Night!

Out of the misty eastern cave,
 Where, all the long and lone daylight,
 Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
 Which make thee terrible and dear,—
 Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
 Star-inwrought!
 Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day,
 Kiss her until she be wearied out,
 Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
 Touching all with thine opiate wand—
 Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sighed for thee;
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
 And the weary Day turned to his rest,
 Lingering like an unloved guest,
 I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
 “Wouldst thou me?”
 Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
 Murmured like a noontide bee,
 “Shall I nestle near thy side?
 Wouldst thou me?”—And I replied,
 “No, not thee!”

LYRICAL POEMS

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
 Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, belovèd Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

203

THE CLOUD

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
 From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
 In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
 The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
 As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
 And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
 And laugh as I pass in thunder,

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
 And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
 While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers,
 Lightning my pilot sits,
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
 It struggles and howls at fits;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
 This pilot is guiding me,

LYRICAL POEMS

Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead,
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,

LYRICAL POEMS

When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
 Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
 Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until
 Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
 (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
 With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
 Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
 Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
 Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
 On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

LYRICAL POEMS

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulcher,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baïæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet the sense faints picturing them! thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

LYRICAL POEMS

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! if even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

LYRICAL POEMS

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

205 HYMN TO THE EARTH, MOTHER OF ALL¹

O UNIVERSAL mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundations deep,
Eldest of things, Great Earth, I sing of thee;
All shapes that have their dwelling in the sea,
All things that fly, or on the ground divine
Live, move, and there are nourished—these are thine;
These from thy wealth thou dost sustain; from thee
Fair babes are born, and fruits on every tree
Hang ripe and large, revered Divinity!

The life of mortal men beneath thy sway
Is held; thy power both gives and takes away!
Happy are they whom thy mild favors nourish,
All things unstinted round them grow and flourish.
For them endures the life-sustaining field
Its load of harvest, and their cattle yield
Large increase, and their house with wealth is filled.
Such honored dwell in cities fair and free,
The homes of lovely women, prosperously;
Their sons exult in youth's new budding gladness,
And their fresh daughters free from care or sadness,
With bloom-inwoven dance and happy song,
On the soft flowers the meadow-grass among,

¹ Translated by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

LYRICAL POEMS

Leap round them sporting—such delights by thee
Are given, rich Power, revered Divinity.

Mother of gods, thou wife of starry Heaven,
Farewell! be thou propitious, and be given
A happy life for this brief melody,
Nor thou nor other songs shall unremembered be.

Homer

206

THE SEA¹

I WILL go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her, and mix her with me;
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast;
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain!
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine,
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;

¹ From *The Triumph of Time*.

LYRICAL POEMS

Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,
Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the rose-leaf tips
With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
Were it once cast off and unwound from me,
Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
Alive and aware of thy waves and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green, and crowned with the foam,
A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
A vein in the heart of the streams of the sea.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

207

YARROW UNVISITED

1803

FROM Stirling Castle we had seen
The mazy Forth unraveled,
Had trod the banks of Clyde and Tay,
And with the Tweed had traveled;
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my "winsome Marrow,"
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow."

"Let Yarrow folk, frae Selkirk town,
Who have been buying, selling,
Go back to Yarrow, 'tis their own,
Each maiden to her dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow,

LYRICAL POEMS

But we will downward with the Tweed,
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

“There’s Galla Water, Leader Haughs,
Both lying right before us;
And Dryburgh, where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus;
There’s pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land
Made blithe with plow and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

“What’s Yarrow but a river bare
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder.”
—Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;
My True-love sighed for sorrow,
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

“O green,” said I, “are Yarrow’s holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!
Fair hangs the apple fræ the rock,
But we will leave it growing.
O’er hilly path and open Strath
We’ll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow.

“Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary’s Lake
Float double, swan and shadow!

LYRICAL POEMS

We will not see them; will not go
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

“Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own,
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We'll keep them, winsome Marrow!
For when we're there, although 'tis fair,
'Twill be another Yarrow!

“If Care with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,—
Should we be loath to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy;
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!”

William Wordsworth

208 SONNET TO THE ISLAND OF SIRMIO¹

GEM of all isthmuses and isles that lie,
Fresh or salt water's children, in clear lake
Or ampler ocean: with what joy do I
Approach thee, Sirmio! Oh! am I awake,
Or dream that once again mine eye beholds
Thee, and has looked its last on Thracian wolds?

¹ The translation is by Charles Stuart Calverley, and is reprinted with the permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.—The poem celebrates the home-coming of its author after a sojourn in the East.

LYRICAL POEMS

Sweetest of sweets to me that pastime seems,
When the mind drops her burden: when—the pain
Of travel past—our own cot we regain,
And nestle on the pillow of our dreams!
'Tis this one thought that cheers us as we roam.
Hail, O fair Sirmio! Joy, thy lord is here!
Joy too, ye waters of the Golden Mere!
And ring out, all ye laughter-peals of home!

Catullus

209 HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

O H, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!
And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush: he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

Robert Browning

LYRICAL POEMS

210 A CHORUS FROM ATALANTA IN CALYDON

WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;

LYRICAL POEMS

And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
 Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
 Ripe grasses trammel a traveling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
 From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
 The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
 Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
 The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide,
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
 The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
 Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
 Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
 The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOW, IN APRIL,

1786

WEE, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
 Thou's met me in an evil hour,
 For I maun crush amang the stoure
 Thy slender stem;
 To spare thee now is past my power,
 Thou bonny gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
 The bonny lark, companion meet,
 Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
 Wi' speckled breast,
 When upward springing, blithe, to greet
 The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter biting north
 Upon thy early, humble birth;
 Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
 Amid the storm,
 Scarce reared above the parent earth
 Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
 High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield:
 But thou beneath the random bield
 O' clod or stane,
 Adorns the histie stibble-field,
 Unseen, alane.

Bield: *shelter*
 Histie: *dry, barren*

Stoure: *dust, dirt*
 Wa's: *walls*

Weet: *wetness*

LYRICAL POEMS

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
 And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet floweret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betrayed,
 And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soiled, is laid
 Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starred!
Unskillful he to note the card
 Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
 And overwhelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is given,
Who long with wants and woes has striven,
By human pride or cunning driven
 To misery's brink,
Till wrenched of every stay but Heaven,
 He, ruined, sink!

Even thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine,—no distant date:
Stern Ruin's plowshare drives, elate,
 Full on thy bloom,
Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight,
 Shall be thy doom!

Robert Burns

TO DAFFODILS

FAIR Daffodils, we weep to see
 You haste away so soon:
 As yet the early-rising Sun
 Has not attained his noon.

Stay, stay,
 Until the hasting day
 Has run
 But to the even-song;
 And, having prayed together, we
 Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
 We have as short a Spring;
 As quick a growth to meet decay
 As you, or any thing.
 We die,
 As your hours do, and dry
 Away
 Like to the Summer's rain;
 Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
 Ne'er to be found again.

Robert Herrick

I WANDERED lonely as a cloud
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
 When all at once I saw a crowd,
 A host, of golden daffodils;

LYRICAL POEMS

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth

214

TO DAFFODILS¹

O YELLOW flowers that Herrick sung!
O yellow flowers that danced and swung
In Wordsworth's verse, and now to me,
Unworthy, from this "pleasant lea,"
Laugh back, unchanged and ever young;—

¹ Reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Alban Dobson and with the Oxford University Press.

LYRICAL POEMS

Ah, what a text to us o'erstrung,
O'erwrought, o'erreaching, hoarse of iung,
You teach by that immortal glee,
O yellow flowers!

We, by the Age's æstrus stung,
Still hunt the New with eager tongue,
Vexed ever with the Old, but ye,
What ye have been ye still shall be,
When we are dust the dust among,
O yellow flowers!

Austin Dobson

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MIGNON'S SONG¹

*MIGNON, a beautiful Italian maiden who is
wandering in a northern land, yearns sadly
for the South and home.*

Know'st thou the land of white-robed orange trees,
Whose golden fruit in the rich-scented breeze
Glow thro' dusk verdure—sunlit realm of flowers,
Of towering laurels and hushed myrtle bowers
Blue-canopied?

With thee, with thee,
To that loved Southland, dearest, I would flee!

Know'st thou the palace mid whose pillared walls,
In lordly chambers and far-shimmering halls,
I roamed, by solitary dreams beguiled,
Till the cold marbles seemed to cry, *Poor child!*
Who wronged thee so?

With thee, with thee,
To that lost home, my loved one, I would flee!

¹ From *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Translated by William F. Giese.

LYRICAL POEMS

Know'st thou the cliffs round which the white clouds sail:
The mounting mule slow climbs the misty trail,
In hollow caves the antique dragon's brood
Lie mid resounding rocks and bellowing flood
And high cascades?

With thee, with thee,
To that far shore, belovèd, I would flee!

Goethe

216 THE CLIME OF THE EAST¹

KNOW ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime!
Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine:
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gúl in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute:
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In color though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine?
'Tis the clime of the East; 'tis the land of the Sun—
Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?
Oh! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
Are the hearts which they bear, and the tales which they tell.

Lord Byron

¹ From *The Bride of Abydos*.

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odor, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

¹The opening stanzas of *The Sensitive Plant*.

LYRICAL POEMS

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odor within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare:

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-colored cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

LYRICAL POEMS

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowrets which, drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

218

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

I N a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the gray bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

LYRICAL POEMS

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them,
Or the wave.

LYRICAL POEMS

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink;
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

219

TO AUTUMN

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;

LYRICAL POEMS

To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last ooziings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

ONCE on a time did Eucritus and I
 (With us Amyntas) to the riverside
 Steal from the city. For Lycopæus' sons
 Were that day busy with the harvest-home,
 Antigènes and Phrasidemus, sprung
 (If aught thou holdest by the good old names)
 By Clytia from great Chalcon—him who erst
 Planted one stalwart knee against the rock,
 And lo, beneath his foot Burinè's rill
 Brake forth, and at its side poplar and elm
 Showed aisles of pleasant shadow, greenly roofed
 By tufted leaves. Scarce midway were we now,
 Nor yet descried the tomb of Brasilas:
 When, thanks be to the Muses, there drew near
 A wayfarer from Crete, young Lycidas.
 The horned herd was his care: a glance might tell
 So much: for every inch a herdsman he.
 Slung o'er his shoulder was a ruddy hide
 Torn from a he-goat, shaggy, tangle-haired,
 That reeked of rennet yet: a broad belt clasped
 A patched cloak round his breast, and for a staff
 A gnarled wild-olive bough his right hand bore.
 Soon with a quiet smile he spoke—his eye

¹ The translation is by Charles Stuart Calverley, and is reprinted with the permission of Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc.—Leigh Hunt thus states the argument of the poem: "The chief part of it relates what befell him [the poet] on his way to a friend's house out of town to join a party at harvest-home. He overtakes a brother poet, who, in respect to his condition in life, might have been to Theocritus what a Burns from the plow might have been to a 'gentleman,' had any such rival poet existed in Burns' time. This inspired rustic, who . . . speaks as well as the gentleman himself, is represented as reciting a poem of his composition, to beguile the way. Theocritus, in return, recites a composition of his own; and the whole piece concludes with a description of the luxurious orchard nest which awaited our author on his arrival at the house he was going to."

LYRICAL POEMS

Twinkled, and laughter sat upon his lip:
“And whither ploddest thou thy weary way
Beneath the noontide sun, Simichidas?
For now the lizard sleeps upon the wall,
The crested lark folds now his wandering wing.
Dost speed, a bidden guest, to some reveler’s board?
Or townward to the treading of the grape?
For lo! recoiling from thy hurrying feet
The pavement-stones ring out right merrily.”
Then I: “Friend Lycid, all men say that none
Of haymakers or herdsmen is thy match
At piping: and my soul is glad thereat.
Yet, to speak sooth, I think to rival thee.
Now look, this road holds holiday to-day:
For banded brethren solemnize a feast
To richly-dight Demeter, thanking her
For her good gifts: since with no grudging hand
Hath the boon goddess filled the wheaten floors.
So come: the way, the day, is thine as mine:
Try we our woodcraft—each may learn from each.
I am, as thou, a clarion-voice of song;
All hail me chief of minstrels. But I am not,
Heaven knows, o’ercredulous: no, I scarce can yet
(I think) outvie Philetas, nor the bard
Of Samos, champion of Sicilian song.
They are as cicadas challenged by a frog.”

I spake to gain mine ends; and laughing light
He said: “Accept this club, as thou’rt indeed
A born truth-teller, shaped by heaven’s own hand!
I hate your builders who would rear a house
High as Oromedon’s mountain-pinnacle:
I hate your song-birds too, whose cuckoo-cry
Struggles (in vain) to match the Chian bard.

LYRICAL POEMS

But come, we'll sing forthwith, Simichidas,
Our woodland music: and for my part I—
List, comrade, if you like the simple air
I forged among the uplands yesterday.

[*Sings*] Safe be my true-love convoyed o'er the main
To Mitylenè—though the southern blast
Chase the lithe waves, while westward slant the Kids,
Or low above the verge Orion stand—
If from Love's furnace she will rescue me,
For Lycidas is parched with hot desire.
Let halcyons lay the sea-waves and the winds,
North wind and west wind, that in shores far off
Flutter the seaweed—halcyons, of all birds
Whose prey is on the waters, held most dear
By the green Nereids: yea let all things smile
On her to Mitylenè voyaging,
And in fair harbor may she ride at last.
I on that day, a chaplet woven of dill
Or rose or simple violet on my brow,
Will draw the wine of Pteleas from the cask,
Stretched by the ingle. They shall roast me beans,
And elbow-deep in thyme and asphodel
And quaintly-curling parsley shall be piled
My bed of rushes, where in royal ease
I sit and, thinking of my darling, drain
With stedfast lip the liquor to the dregs.
I'll have a pair of pipers, shepherds both,
This from Acharnæ, from Lycopè that;
And Tityrus shall be near me and shall sing
How the swain Daphnis loved the stranger-maid;
And how he ranged the fells, and how the oaks
(Such oaks as Himera's banks are green withal)
Sang dirges o'er him waning fast away

LYRICAL POEMS

Like snow on Athos, or on Hæmus high,
Or Rhodopè, or utmost Caucasus.
And he shall sing me how the big chest held
(All through the maniac malice of his lord)
A living goatherd: how the round-faced bees,
Lured from their meadow by the cedar-smell,
Fed him with daintiest flowers, because the Muse
Had made his throat a well-spring of sweet song.
Happy Comatas, this sweet lot was thine!
Thee the chest prisoned, for thee the honey-bees
Toiled, as thou slavedst out the mellowing year:
And oh hadst thou been numbered with the quick
In my day! I had led thy pretty goats
About the hillside, listening to thy voice:
While thou hadst laid thee down 'neath oak or pine,
Divine Comatas, warbling pleasantly."

He spake and paused; and thereupon spake I.
"I too, friend Lycid, as I ranged the fells,
Have learned much lore and pleasant from the Nymphs,
Whose fame mayhap hath reached the throne of Zeus.
But this wherewith I'll grace thee ranks the first:
Thou listen, since the Muses like thee well.

[*Sings*] On me the young Loves sneezed: for hapless I
Am fain of Myrto as the goats of Spring.
But my best friend Aratus inly pines
For one who loves him not. Aristis saw—
(A wondrous seer is he, whose lute and lay
Shrinèd Apollo's self would scarce disdain)—
How love had scorched Aratus to the bone.
O Pan, who hauntest Homolè's fair champaign,
Bring the soft charmer, whosoe'er it be,

LYRICAL POEMS

Unbid to his sweet arms—so, gracious Pan,
 May ne'er thy ribs and shoulderblades be lashed
 With squills by young Arcadians, whensoever
 They are scant of supper! But should this my prayer
 Mislike thee, then on nettles mayest thou sleep,
 Dinted and sore all over from their claws!
 Then mayest thou lodge amid Edonian hills
 By Hebrus, in midwinter; there subsist,
 The Bear thy neighbor: and, in summer, range
 With the far Æthiops 'neath the Blemmyan rocks
 Where Nile is no more seen! But O ye Loves,
 Whose checks are like pink apples, quit your homes
 By Hyetis, or Byblis' pleasant rill,
 Or fair Dionè's rocky pedestal,
 And strike that fair one with your arrows, strike
 The ill-starred damsel who disdains my friend.
 And lo, what is she but an o'erripe pear?
 The girls all cry 'Her bloom is on the wane.'
 We'll watch, Aratus, at that porch no more,
 Nor waste shoe-leather: let the morning cock
 Crow to wake others up to numb despair!
 Let Molon, and none else, that ordeal brave:
 While we make ease our study, and secure
 Some witch, to charm all evil from our door."

I ceased. He, smiling sweetly as before,
 Gave me the staff, "the Muses' parting gift,"
 And leftward sloped tow'rd Pyxa. We the while
 Bent us to Phrasydeme's, Eucritus and I,
 And baby-faced Amyntas: there we lay
 Half-buried in a couch of fragrant reed
 And fresh-cut vine-leaves, who so glad as we?
 A wealth of elm and poplar shook o'er head:
 Hard by a sacred spring flowed gurgling on

LYRICAL POEMS

From the Nymphs' grot, and in the somber boughs
The sweet cicada chirped laboriously.
Hid in the thick thorn-bushes far away
The tree frog's note was heard; the crested lark
Sang with the goldfinch; turtles made their moan,
And o'er the fountain hung the gilded bee.
All of rich summer smacked, of autumn all:
Pears at our feet, and apples at our side,
Rolled in luxuriance; branches on the ground
Sprawled, overweighed with damsons; while we brushed
From the cask's head the crust of four long years.
Say, ye who dwell upon Parnassian peaks,
Nymphs of Castalia, did old Chiron e'er
Set before Heracles a cup so brave
In Pholus' cavern—did as nectarous draughts
Cause that Anapian shepherd, in whose hand
Rocks were as pebbles, Polypheme the strong,
Featly to foot it o'er the cottage lawns:—
As, ladies, ye bid flow that day for us
All by Demeter's shrine at harvest-home?
Beside whose cornstacks may I oft again
Plant my broad fan: while she stands by and smiles,
Poppies and corn sheaves on each laden arm.

Theocritus

221

AN AUTUMN IDYLL¹

"Sweet Themmes! runne softly, till I end my song."

Spenser

LAWRENCE

FRANK

JACK

LAWRENCE

HERE, where the beech-nuts drop among the grasses,
Push the boat in, and throw the rope ashore.
Jack, hand me out the claret and the glasses;
Here let us sit. We landed here before.

¹ Reprinted through special arrangement with Mr. Alban Dobson and with the Oxford University Press.

LYRICAL POEMS

FRANK

Jack's undecided. Say, *formose puer*,¹
Bent in a dream above the "water wan,"
Shall we row higher, for the reeds are fewer,
There by the pollards, where you see the swan?

JACK

Hist! That's a pike. Look—nose against the river,
Gaunt as a wolf,—the sly old privateer!
Enter a gudgeon. Snap,—a gulp, a shiver;—
Exit the gudgeon. Let us anchor here.

FRANK (*in the grass*)

Jove, what a day! Black Care upon the crupper
Nods at his post, and slumbers in the sun;
Half of Theocritus, with a touch of Tupper,
Churns in my head. The frenzy has begun!

LAWRENCE

Sing to us then. Damœtas in a choker,
Much out of tune, will edify the rooks.

FRANK

Sing you again. So musical a croaker
Surely will draw the fish upon the hooks.

¹ Handsome youth.

LYRICAL POEMS

JACK

Sing while you may. The beard of manhood still is
Faint on your cheeks, but I, alas! am old.
Doubtless you yet believe in Amaryllis;—
Sing me of Her, whose name may not be told.

FRANK

Listen, O Thames! His budding beard is riper,
Say—by a week. Well, Lawrence, shall we sing?

LAWRENCE

Yes, if you will. But ere I play the piper,
Let him declare the prize he has to bring.

JACK

Hear then, my Shepherds. Lo, to him accounted
First in the song, a Pipe I will impart;—
This, my Belovèd, marvelously mounted,
Amber and foam,—a miracle of art.

LAWRENCE

Lordly the gift. O Muse of many numbers,
Grant me a soft alliterative song!

FRANK

Me too, O Muse! And when the Umpire slumbers,
Sting him with gnats a summer evening long.

LYRICAL POEMS

LAWRENCE

Not in a cot, begarlanded of spiders,
Not where the brook traditionally "purls,"—
No, in the Row, supreme among the riders,
Seek I the gem,—the paragon of girls.

FRANK

Not in the waste of column and of coping,
Not in the sham and stucco of a square,—
No, on a June-lawn, to the water sloping,
Stands she I honor, beautifully fair.

LAWRENCE

Dark-haired is mine, with splendid tresses plaited
Back from the brows, imperially curled;
Calm as a grand, far-looking Caryatid,
Holding the roof that covers in a world.

FRANK

Dark-haired is mine, with breezy ripples swinging
Loose as a vine-branch blowing in the morn;
Eyes like the morning, mouth forever singing,
Blithe as a bird new risen from the corn.

LAWRENCE

Best is the song with the music interwoven:
Mine's a musician,—musical at heart,—
Throbs to the gathered grieving of Beethoven,
Sways to the light coquetting of Mozart.

LYRICAL POEMS

FRANK

Best? You should hear mine thrilling out a ballad,
Queen at a picnic, leader of the glees,
Not too divine to toss you up a salad,
Great in Sir Roger danced among the trees.

LAWRENCE

Ah, when the thick night flares with dropping torches,
Ah, when the crush-room empties of the swarm,
Pleasant the hand that, in the gusty porches,
Light as a snowflake, settles on your arm.

FRANK

Better the twilight and the cheery chatting,—
Better the dim, forgotten garden seat,
Where one may lie, and watch the fingers tatting,
Lounging with Bran or Bevis at her feet.

LAWRENCE

All worship mine. Her purity doth hedge her
Round with so delicate divinity, that men,
Stained to the soul with money-bag and ledger
Bend to the goddess, manifest again.

FRANK

None worship mine. But some, I fancy, love her.—
Cynics to boot. I know the children run,
Seeing her come, for naught that I discover,
Save that she brings the summer and the sun.

LYRICAL POEMS

LAWRENCE

Mine is a Lady, beautiful and queenly,
Crowned with a sweet, continual control,
Grandly forbearing, lifting life serenely
E'en to her own nobility of soul.

FRANK

Mine is a Woman, kindly beyond measure,
Fearless in praising, faltering in blame:
Simply devoted to other people's pleasure,—
Jack's sister Florence,—now you know her name.

LAWRENCE

"Jack's sister Florence!" Never, Francis, never.
Jack, do you hear? Why, it was she I meant.
She like the country! Ah, she's far too clever—

FRANK

There you are wrong. I know her down in Kent.

LAWRENCE

You'll get a sunstroke, standing with your head bare.
Sorry to differ. Jack,—the word's with you.

FRANK

How is it, Umpire? Though the motto's threadbare,
"*Cælum, non animum*"¹—is, I take it, true.

¹ "—*mutant qui trans mare currunt*" (Horace): They who speed across the sea do indeed change the sky above their heads, but not their souls.

LYRICAL POEMS

JACK

"*Souvent femme varie*,"¹ as a rule, is truer;
Flattered, I'm sure,—but both of you romance.
Happy to further suit of either wooer,
Merely observing—you haven't got a chance.

LAWRENCE

Yes. But the Pipe—

FRANK

The Pipe is what we care for,—

JACK

Well, in this case, I scarcely need explain,
Judgment of mine were indiscreet, and therefore,—
Peace to you both. The Pipe I shall retain.

Austin Dobson

222

FIESOLAN IDYLL

HERE, where precipitate Spring, with one light bound
Into hot Summer's lusty arms, expires,
And where go forth at morn, at eve, at night,
Soft airs that want the lute to play with 'em,
And softer sighs that know not what they want,
Aside a wall, beneath an orange-tree,
Whose tallest flowers could tell the lowlier ones
Of sights in Fiesolé right up above,

¹ Woman often changes.

LYRICAL POEMS

While I was gazing a few paces off
At what they seemed to show me with their nods,
Their frequent whispers and their pointing shoots,
A gentle maid came down the garden-steps
And gathered the pure treasure in her lap.
I heard the branches rustle, and stepped forth
To drive the ox away, or mule, or goat,
Such I believed it must be. How could I
Let beast o'erpower them? When hath wind or rain
Borne hard upon weak plant that wanted me,
And I (however they might bluster round)
Walked off? 'Twere most ungrateful: for sweet scents
Are the swift vehicles of still sweeter thoughts,
And nurse and pillow the dull memory
That would let drop without them her best stores.
They bring me tales of youth and tones of love.
And 'tis and ever was my wish and way
To let all flowers live freely, and all die
(Whene'er their Genius bids their souls depart)
Among their kindred in their native place.
I never pluck the rose; the violet's head
Hath shaken with my breath upon its bank
And not reproached me: the ever-sacred cup
Of the pure lily hath between my hands
Felt safe, unsoiled, nor lost one grain of gold.
I saw the light that made the glossy leaves
More glossy; the fair arm, the fairer cheek
Warmed by the eye intent on its pursuit;
I saw the foot that, altho' half erect
From its gray slipper, could not lift her up
To what she wanted: I held down a branch
And gathered her some blossoms; since their hour
Was come, and bees had wounded them, and flies
Of harder wing were working their way thro'

LYRICAL POEMS

And scattering them in fragments underfoot.
So crisp were some, they rattled unevolved,
Others, ere broken off, fell into shells,
For such appear the petals when detached,
Unbending, brittle, lucid, white like snow,
And like snow not seen thro', by eye or sun:
Yet every one her gown received from me
Was fairer than the first. I thought not so,
But so she praised them to reward my care.
I said, "You find the largest."

"This indeed,"

Cried she, "is large and sweet." She held one forth,
Whether for me to look at or to take
She knew not, nor did I; but taking it
Would best have solved (and this she felt) her doubt.
I dared not touch it; for it seemed a part
Of her own self; fresh, full, the most mature
Of blossoms, yet a blossom; with a touch
To fall, and yet unfallen. She drew back
The boon she tendered, and then, finding not
The ribbon at her waist to fix it in,
Dropped it, as loath to drop it, on the rest.

Walter Savage Landor

223 A WINNOWER OF WHEAT TO THE WINDS¹

TO you, ærial band,
Who fly above the land
With transitory wings,
And whistling on your way
The greenwood shadows sway
In gentle balancings,

¹ The translation is by George Wyndham, and is reprinted with the permission of Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

LYRICAL POEMS

I give these violets,
These lilies and flow'rets,
And these roses to you,
Roses to wonder on,
Being so newly blown,
And these carnations too.

With breathing sweet and soft,
Blow hither o'er the croft,
Blow hither o'er the lay:
The weary while I strain
At winnowing my grain
Through the white heat of day.

Joachim du Bellay

224

A MODERN GEORGIC

THE STEAM THRESHING-MACHINE
WITH THE STRAW CARRIER

FLUSH with the pond the lurid furnace burned
At eve, while smoke and vapor filled the yard;
The gloomy winter sky was dimly starred,
The fly-wheel with a mellow murmur turned;

While, ever rising on its mystic stair
In the dim light, from secret chambers borne,
The straw of harvest, severed from the corn,
Climbed, and fell over, in the murky air.

I thought of mind and matter, will and law,
And then of him, who set his stately seal
Of Roman words on all the forms he saw
Of old-world husbandry: *I* could but feel
With what a rich precision *he* would draw
The endless ladder, and the booming wheel!

Charles Tennyson-Turner

Croft: *field*

Lay: *lea, meadow*

WHEN icicles hang by the wall,
 And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
 And Tom bears logs into the hall,
 And milk comes frozen home in pail;
 When blood is nipt, and ways be foul,
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 Tu-whit!
 Tu-who! A merry note!
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all about the wind doth blow,
 And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
 And birds sit brooding in the snow,
 And Marian's nose looks red and raw;
 When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl—
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 Tu-whit!
 Tu-who! A merry note!
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

William Shakespeare

THE GRASSHOPPER¹

HAPPY insect, what can be
 In happiness compared to thee?
 Fed with nourishment divine,
 The dewy morning's gentle wine!
 Nature waits upon thee still,
 And thy verdant cup docs fill;

¹ Translated by Abraham Cowley.

Keel: cool by stirring

LYRICAL POEMS

'Tis filled wherever thou dost tread,
Nature's self's thy Ganymede.
Thou dost drink and dance and sing,
Happier than the happiest king!
All the fields which thou dost see,
All the plants belong to thee;
All the summer hours produce,
Fertile made with early juice.
Man for thee does sow and plow,
Farmer he, and landlord thou!
Thou dost innocently enjoy,
Nor does thy luxury destroy.
The shepherd gladly heareth thee,
More harmonious than he.
Thee country hinds with gladness hear,
Prophet of the ripened year!
Thee Phœbus loves, and does inspire;
Phœbus is himself thy sire.
To thee, of all things upon earth,
Life is no longer than thy mirth.
Happy insect, happy thou,
Dost neither age nor winter know;
But when thou'st drunk and danced and sung
Thy fill, the flowery leaves among
(Voluptuous and wise withal,
Epicurean animal!),
Sated with thy summer feast,
Thou retir'st to endless rest.

Anacreon

227 ON A FAVORITE CAT, DROWNED IN A
 TUB OF GOLDFISHES

'T WAS on a lofty vase's side,
 Where China's gayest art had dyed
 The azure flowers that blow,
 Demurest of the tabby kind,
 The pensive Selima, reclined,
 Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declared:
 The fair round face, the snowy beard,
 The velvet of her paws,
 Her coat that with the tortoise vies,
 Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,
 She saw; and purred applause.

Still had she gazed, but 'midst the tide
 Two angel forms were seen to glide,
 The Genii of the stream:
 Their scaly armor's Tyrian hue
 Through richest purple to the view
 Betrayed a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw:
 A whisker first, and then a claw
 With many an ardent wish
 She stretched, in vain, to reach the prize—
 What female heart can gold despise?
 What Cat's averse to Fish?

Presumptuous maid! with looks intent
 Again she stretched, again she bent,

LYRICAL POEMS

Nor knew the gulf between—
Malignant Fate sat by and smiled—
The slippery verge her feet beguiled;
She tumbled headlong in!

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mewed to every watery God
Some speedy aid to send:—
No Dolphin came, no Nereid stirred,
Nor cruel Tom nor Susan heard—
A favorite has no friend!

From hence, ye Beauties, undeceived,
Know one false step is ne'er retrieved,
And be with caution bold:
Not all that tempts your wandering eyes
And heedless hearts, is lawful prize,
Nor all that glisters, gold!

Thomas Gray

228 ON THE DEATH OF LESBIA'S SPARROW¹

LOVES and Graces mourn with me,
L Mourn, fair youths, where'er ye be!
Dead my Lesbia's sparrow is,
Sparrow, that was all her bliss,
Than her very eyes more dear;
For he made her dainty cheer,
Knew her well, as any maid
Knows her mother, never strayed
From her bosom, but would go
Hopping round her, to and fro,
And to her, and her alone,

¹ Translated by Sir Theodore Martin.

LYRICAL POEMS

Chirruped with such pretty tone.
Now he treads that gloomy track,
Whence none ever may come back.
Out upon you, and your power,
Which all fairest things devour,
Orcus' gloomy shades, that e'er
Ye took my bird that was so fair!
Ah, the pity of it! Thou
Poor bird, thy doing 'tis, that now
My loved one's eyes are swollen and red,
With weeping for her darling dead.

Catullus

229

TO A MOUSE

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOW,
NOVEMBER, 1785

WEE, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

Bickering brattle: *hurrying pace*
Laith: *loath*

Pattle: *paddle (used to clean the plow)*
Sleekit: *sleek*

LYRICAL POEMS

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
 What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
 A daimen-icker in a thrave
 'S a sma' request:
 I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
 And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
 Its silly wa's the win's are strewin':
 And naething, now, to big a new ane,
 O' foggage green!
 An' bleak December's winds ensuin'
 Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste
 An' weary winter comin' fast,
 An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
 Thou thought to dwell,
 Till, crash! the cruel coulter past
 Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
 Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
 Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,
 But house or hald,
 To thole the winter's sleety dribble
 An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane
 In proving foresight may be vain:
 The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men

Big: *build*

But: *without*

Cranreuch: *hoar-frost*

Daimen-icker: *occasional
car of corn*

Foggage: *grass*

Hald: *shelter*

Lave: *remainder*

Snell: *biting*

Thole: *endure*

Thrave: *twenty-four*

sheaves of grain

Thy lane: *thysel'f alone*

Wa's: *walls*

Whiles: *sometimes*

LYRICAL POEMS

Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

Robert Burns

230

TO THE CUCKOO

O BLITHE new-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice:
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the vale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

A-gley: *wrong, awry*

Lea'e: *leave*

LYRICAL POEMS

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, fairy place,
That is fit home for Thee!

William Wordsworth

231

TO A WATERFOWL

WHITHER, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

LYRICAL POEMS

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed-ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—
The desert and illimitable air,—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere;
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

William Cullen Bryant

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit!
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden light'ning
 Of the sunken sun,
 O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
 Thou dost float and run;
 Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight;
 Like a star of heaven
 In the broad daylight
 Thou art unseen,—but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
 Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear,
 Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.

LYRICAL POEMS

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glowworm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowerèd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves.

LYRICAL POEMS

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine:

Chorus Hymenæal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be—
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

LYRICAL POEMS

We look before and after
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.¹

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound—
Better than all treasures
That in books are found—
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

233

PHILOMELA

HARK! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark—what pain!

¹ "The most beautiful songs are those most laden with despair."—
Alfred de Musset.

LYRICAL POEMS

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewildered brain
That wild, unquenched, deep-sunken, old-world pain—
Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy racked heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?

Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and seared eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?

Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?

Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!
Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!

Matthew Arnold

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thine happiness,—
 That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
 Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purple-stainèd mouth;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget,
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs,
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

LYRICAL POEMS

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

LYRICAL POEMS

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that ofttimes hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hillside; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

John Keats

235

DEJECTION: AN ODE

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.

*Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence*¹

WELL! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade

¹ The ballad is reprinted above, p. 40.

LYRICAL POEMS

Than those which mold yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
 Upon the strings of this Æolian lute,
 Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light
 (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
 But rimmed and circled by a silver thread),
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
 The coming on of rain and squally blast,
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
 And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
 In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed,
 All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
 And its peculiar tint of yellow green;
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen;
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;

LYRICAL POEMS

I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

My genial spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavor,
Though I should gaze forever
On that green light that lingers in the west;
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live;
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.

Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,

LYRICAL POEMS

Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,
A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colors a suffusion from that light.

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan;
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out

LYRICAL POEMS

That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.

Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!

What tell'st thou now about?

'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!

And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay.

'Tis of a little child

Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way;
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!

LYRICAL POEMS

With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

236

A LAMENT

O WORLD! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight:
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—oh, never more!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

237

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES

THE sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,

LYRICAL POEMS

The breath of the moist earth is light
Around its unexpanded buds;

Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself is soft like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor

With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone—

The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.

Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

LYRICAL POEMS

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

238

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-pilèd books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garnerers the full-ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

John Keats

239

IN THE SHADOWS

IF it must be; if it must be, O God!
That I die young, and make no further moans;
That underneath the unrespective sod,
In unescutcheoned privacy, my bones

LYRICAL POEMS

Shall crumble soon,—then give me strength to bear,
The last convulsive throe of too sweet breath!
I tremble from the edge of life, to dare
The dark and fatal leap, having no faith,
No glorious yearning for the Apocalypse.
But like a child that in the nighttime cries
For light, I cry; forgetting the eclipse
Of knowledge and our human destinies.
O peevish and uncertain soul! obey
The law of life in patience till the Day.

David Gray

240 EPISTLE IN FORM OF A BALLAD TO HIS FRIENDS¹

HAVE pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace!
I lie not under hazel or hawthorn-tree
Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace.
Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o'er head,
Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle-ware,
Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race
And run like folk light-witted as ye be
And have in hand nor current coin nor base,
Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.
Rhymers of lays and roundels sung and read,

¹ Translated by Algernon Charles Swinburne.

LYRICAL POEMS

Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.
Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,
May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,
Come and behold him in this piteous case,
Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,
But only God in heaven; behold his face
Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,
Which makes his teeth like rakes; and when he hath fed
With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,
Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,
With board nor stool, but low on earth instead;
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Princes afore-named, old and young foresaid,
Get me the king's seal and my pardon sped,
And hoist me in some basket up with care:
So swine will help each other ill bested,
For where one squeaks they run in heaps ahead.
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

François Villon

241 THE EPITAPH IN FORM OF A BALLAD

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMRADES, EX-
PECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM ¹

MEN, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here are we five or six strung up, you see,

¹ Translated by Algernon Charles Swinburne.

LYRICAL POEMS

And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; ye know that all alive
Have not wit alway to walk righteously;
Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows; never are we free,
Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruits on garden wall;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that Hell be not our bitter bed;
We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

François Villon

A BARD'S EPITAPH

IS there a whim-inspired fool,
 Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
 Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
 Let him draw near;
 And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
 And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
 Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
 That weekly this area throng,
 O, pass not by!
 But, with a frater-feeling strong,
 Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear
 Can others teach the course to steer,
 Yet runs, himself, life's mad career
 Wild as the wave;
 Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
 Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
 Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
 And keenly felt the friendly glow,
 And softer flame;
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stained his name!

LYRICAL POEMS

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
 In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious self-control
 Is wisdom's root.

Robert Burns

243 ON COMPLETING HIS THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR

'TIS time this heart should be unmoved,
 Since others it hath ceased to move:
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
 Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
 The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
 Are mine alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
 Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
 A funeral pile.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
 The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
 But wear the chain.

But 'tis not *thus*—and 'tis not *here*—
 Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
 Or binds his brow.

LYRICAL POEMS

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

Awake! (not Greece—she *is* awake!)
Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood!—unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of beauty be.

If thou regrett'st thy youth, *why live?*
The land of honorable death
Is here:—up to the field, and give
Away thy breath!

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest.

Lord Byron

244 ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE

HOW soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth

LYRICAL POEMS

That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

John Milton

245

CYRIACK, this three-years-day these eyes, though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In Liberty's defense, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask,
Content though blind, had I no better guide.

John Milton

246

WORLDLY PLACE

EVEN in a palace, life may be led well!
So spake the imperial sage, purest of men,
Marcus Aurelius. But the stifling den
Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,

LYRICAL POEMS

Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
And drudge under some foolish master's ken
Who rates us if we peer outside our pen—
Matched with a palace, is not this a hell?
Even in a palace! On his truth sincere,
Who spoke these words, no shadow ever came;
And when my ill-schooled spirit is aflame
Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,
I'll stop, and say: "There were no succor here!
The aids to noble life are all within."¹

Matthew Arnold

247

T IRED with all these, for restful death I cry—
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honor shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive Good attending captain Ill:—
—Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my Love alone.

William Shakespeare

¹ A translation of the passage which inspired this sonnet may be seen in *Prose*, p. 445.

LYRICAL POEMS

248

SAY not, the struggle naught availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

Arthur Hugh Clough

249

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS¹

THIS is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,—
The venturous bark that flings

¹ The poem appears in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, where it is thus introduced: "Did I not say to you a little while ago that the universe swam in an ocean of similitudes and analogies? I will not quote Cowley, or Burns, or Wordsworth, just now, to show you what thoughts were suggested to them by the simplest natural object, such as a flower or a leaf; but I will read you a few lines, if you do not object, suggested by looking at a section of one of those chambered shells to which is given the name of Pearly Nautilus. . . . If you will look into Roget's Bridgewater Treatise, you will find a figure of one of these shells, and a section of it. The last will show you the series of enlarging compartments successively dwelt in by the animal that inhabits the shell, which is built in a widening spiral. Can you find no lesson in this?"

LYRICAL POEMS

On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,—
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,

LYRICAL POEMS

Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

Oliver Wendell Holmes

250

POOR Soul, the center of my sinful earth,
Fooled by those rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?
Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:—
So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

William Shakespeare

251 THE DISPUTE OF THE HEART AND BODY OF FRANÇOIS VILLON¹

WHO is this I hear?—*Lo, this is I, thine heart,
That holds on merely now by a slender string.
Strength fails me, shape and sense are rent apart,
The blood in me is turned to a bitter thing,
Seeing thee skulk here like a dog shivering.—*
Yea, and for what?—*For that thy sense found sweet.—*
What irks it thee?—*I feel the sting of it.—*
Leave me at peace.—*Why?—Nay now, leave me at peace;*

¹ Translated by Algernon Charles Swinburne. In this edition italics distinguish the speeches of the "heart."

LYRICAL POEMS

I will repent when I grow ripe in wit.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

What art thou, trow?—A man worth praise, perfay.—

This is thy thirtieth year of wayfaring.—

'Tis a mule's age.—*Art thou a boy still?—Nay.—*

Is it hot lust that spurs thee with its sting,

Grasping thy throat? Know'st thou not anything?—

Yea, black and white, when milk is specked with flies,

I can make out.—*No more?—Nay, in no wise.*

Shall I begin again the count of these?—

Thou art undone.—I will make shift to rise.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

I have the sorrow of it, and thou the smart.

Wert thou a poor mad fool or weak of wit,

Then mightst thou plead this pretext with thine heart;

But if thou know not good from evil a whit,

Either thy head is hard as stone to hit,

Or shame, not honor, gives thee most content.

What canst thou answer to this argument?—

When I am dead I shall be well at ease.—

God! what good hope!—Thou art over-cloquent.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Whence is this ill?—From sorrow and not from sin.

When Saturn packed my wallet up for me

I well believe he put these ills therein.—

Fool, wilt thou make thy servant lord of thee?

Hear now the wise king's counsel; thus saith he:

All power upon the stars a wise man hath;

There is no planet that shall do him scathe.—

Nay, as they made me I grow and I decrease.—

What say'st thou?—Truly this is all my faith.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

LYRICAL POEMS

*Wouldst thou live still?—God help me that I may!—
Then thou must—What? turn penitent and pray?—
Read always—What?—Grave words and good to say;
Leave off the ways of fools, lest they displease.—
Good; I will do it.—Wilt thou remember?—Yea.—
Abide not till there come an evil day.
I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.*

François Villon

252

ODE TO DUTY

STERN Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe,
From vain temptations dost set free,
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth:
Glad hearts! without reproach or blot,
Who do thy work, and know it not:
O! if through confidence misplaced
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around them cast.

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security.

LYRICAL POEMS

And they a blissful course may hold
Ev'n now, who, not unwisely bold,
Live in the spirit of this creed,
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried, .
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust:
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control,
But in the quietness of thought:
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance desires:
My hopes no more must change their name;
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and
strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend

LYRICAL POEMS

Unto thy guidance from this hour;
O let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of Truth thy bondman let me live.

William Wordsworth

253 COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

William Wordsworth

254

SPEAK low to me, my Savior, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss thee so,
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,

LYRICAL POEMS

Let my tears drop like amber while I go
In reach of thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection,—thus, in sooth,
To lose the sense of losing; as a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood forevermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

255

CROSSING THE BAR¹

SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

Alfred Tennyson

¹ Reprinted with the permission of The Macmillan Company.

IV

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND
ELEGIAC POEMS

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life . . .

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM OF NAISHÁPÚR¹

*Ages of Progress! These eight hundred years
Hath Europe shuddered with her hopes or fears,
And now!—she listens in the wilderness
To thee and half believeth what she hears!*

*Hadst thou the Secret? Ah, and who may tell?
“An hour we have,” thou saidst. “Ah, waste it well!”
An hour we have, and yet Eternity
Looms o’er us, and the thought of Heaven or Hell!*

*Nay, we can never be as wise as thou,
O idle singer ’neath the blossomed bough.
Nay, and we cannot be content to die.
We cannot shirk the questions “Where?” and “How?”*

—ANDREW LANG

¹ The text is that of the fifth edition. Though ostensibly a translation, the poem as a whole is more properly regarded as an original production developed from suggestions furnished by the Persian poet. (See the introduction to *The Quatrains of Omar Kheyyam*, by John Payne.) The material contained in the notes is mainly derived from Fitzgerald’s commentary, which without further acknowledgment is freely transcribed or paraphrased; from Nathan Haskell Dole’s *multivariorum* edition of the *Rubáiyát*; and from the work by John Payne which is referred to above. The epigraph, for which the present editors are responsible, is reprinted through special arrangement with Charles Scribner’s Sons.

I

WAKE! For the Sun who scattered into flight
 The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
 Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
 The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,¹
 Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
 "When all the Temple is prepared within,
 Why nods the drowsy Worshiper outside?"

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
 The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
 You know how little while we have to stay,
 And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,²
 The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
 Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough
 Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.³

¹ The false morning was a transient light on the horizon about an hour before the true dawn,—a well-known phenomenon in the East.

² Omar's new year began with the vernal equinox.

³ That is: where blossoms on the bough come forth white like the hand of Moses (when God made it "leprous as snow"—*Exodus*, iv, 6), and where plants awakened by the breath of Jesus spring up out of the earth. According to the Persians the healing power of Jesus resided in his breath.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,¹
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ringed Cup where no one knows;²
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehleví, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers t' incarnadine.³

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.⁴

¹ Probably meaning: The city of Iram, with all its roses, is no more.

² Jamshyd, often mentioned in the poem, was a legendary Persian king, whose seven-ringed cup—typical of the seven heavens, seven planets, seven seas, etc.—bore astronomical signs and mystic letters, whereby its possessor could foretell events. A commentator recalls to mind the divining cup of Joseph. See *Prose*, p. 763.

³ The nightingale, in its high ancient language (Pehleví was the old heroic Sanskrit of Persia), bids the yellow rose drink the red wine and become red.

⁴ Kaikobád, like Jamshyd, was a legendary Persian king; Kaikhosrú, of the next quatrain, was his great-grandson.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?

Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to Supper—heed not you.¹

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne!²

XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!³

XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!⁴

¹ Zál and Rustum, his son, are heroes of the *Shahnama*, the Persian epic. (This is the Rustum of Matthew Arnold's poem: see above, p. 308.) Hátim is a well-known type of Oriental generosity.

² Sultan Mahmúd, who lived about a century earlier than Omar Khayyám, was famous for his successful invasions of India, whence he carried away rich treasures.

³ *Enow* is an old form of *enough*.

⁴ In the original quatrain the suggestion of the last line is distinct. The "credit," the promise of happiness in some remote hereafter, may be deceptive: heard from afar even the beating of a drum sounds sweet.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."¹

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turned
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

XVII

Think, in this battered Caravanserai²
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

XVIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:³
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

¹ The treasure of the rose is its golden center.

² Variant of *caravansary* (inn).

³ The great courts of the palaces at Persepolis, which even in the time of Omar had been in ruins for a thousand years.

XIX

I sometimes think that never blows so red
 The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
 That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
 Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
 Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
 Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
 From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
 To-day of past Regrets and future Fears:
 To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
 Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
 That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
 Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
 And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
 They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
 Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
 Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

XXV

Alike for those who for To-DAY prepare,
And those that after some To-MORROW stare,
A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries,
“Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There.”¹

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scattered, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reaped—
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

¹ The muezzín was a public crier who from the minaret of a mosque called Mohammedans to their prayers.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Center through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,¹
And many a Knot unraveled by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.²

¹ In the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, which is here assumed, the earth is stationary at the center, and around it, in increasingly distant circles, revolve the moon, Mercury, Venus, sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—Saturn being the seventh of the series.

² There was talk of human beings as of personalities distinct from the Universal Soul.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;¹
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs revealed
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I leaned, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmured—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answered, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kissed,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:

¹ Purple was in the East a mourning color. It was a Persian fancy that the sea had lost God.

² I called upon God (the Universal Soul in which I share) for a lamp to guide me: my only lamp—I was told for answer—was my own soul or understanding (my part of the Universal Soul),—and that was blind.

And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmured—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations rolled
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mold?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw¹
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplexed no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

¹ It was the custom to throw a little wine upon the ground before drinking.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are To-day what YESTERDAY
You were—To-morrow you shall not be less.¹

XLIII

So when that Angel of the darker Drink ²
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcass crippled to abide?

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one-day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.³

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;

¹ All things begin and end in—nothing.

² Azrael, the angel of death.

³ The dark ferrásh, or tent-pitcher, is death.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The Eternal Sáki¹ from that Bowl has poured
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reached
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
And upon what, prithee, may life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif² were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;

¹ The Eternal Cupbearer.

² The first letter of the Arabic alphabet.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;¹ and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

LII

A moment guessed—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama rolled
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, You when shall be You no more?

LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavor and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

LVI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,

¹ From fish to moon.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.¹

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the Grape!

LIX

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:²
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde³
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

¹ Omar was a mathematician and astronomer, and here jests at his studies. The next stanza alludes to his important achievement as one of eight men who reformed the calendar.

² Seventy-two religions were supposed to divide the world.

³ Alluding to Mahmúd's conquest of the dark people of non-Mohammedan India. (See the note above, p. 688.)

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
BlaspHEME the twisted tendril as a Snare?

A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

LXIII

O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

LXIV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learned
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burned,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to Sleep returned.

LXVI

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
 Some letter of that After-life to spell:
 And by and by my Soul returned to me,
 And answered "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell:"

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
 And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
 Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
 So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
 Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held
 In Midnight by the Master of the Show;¹

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
 Upon this Checker-board of Nights and Days;
 Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
 And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
 But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
 And He that tossed you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

¹ A magic-lantern: the cylindrical interior being painted with various figures, and so lightly poised and ventilated as to revolve round the lighted candle within.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for *It*
As impotently moves as you or I.

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sowed the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.¹

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
TO-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

LXXV

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

¹ "They" refers, vaguely, to the ruler of the universe, or God. In this stanza, and elsewhere, the poet embraces a deterministic philosophy—the belief that all the actions of man, as well as all events external to him, have happened in a necessary sequence from some unimagined beginning, and will continue to happen in the same manner forever.

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fiber: which about
 If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;¹
 Of my Base metal may be filed a Key
 That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True Light
 Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
 One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
 Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
 A conscious Something to resent the yoke
 Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
 Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
 Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allayed—
 Sue for a Debt he never did contract,
 And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

LXXX

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
 Beset the Road I was to wander in,
 Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
 Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

¹ When upon the shoulders of the horse of heaven (that is, of the firmament of stars) God flung the Pleiades and the planet Jupiter, and thus first established them in their places, even then—countless ages ago—was the love of wine made a part of my being; and if it abides with me still—let the pious jeer.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

LXXXI

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:

For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,¹

Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;

And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listened perhaps, but never talked at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en

And to this Figure molded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;

And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

¹ Ramazán is the month of fasting.

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
 Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make;
 "They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
 What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

LXXXVII

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
 I think a Sûfi¹ pipkin—waxing hot—
 "All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
 Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell
 Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
 The luckless Pots he marred in making—Pish!
 He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

LXXXIX

"Well," murmured one, "Let whoso make or buy,
 My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
 But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
 Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
 The little Moon looked in that all were seeking:²
 And then they jogged each other, "Brother! Brother!
 Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

¹ The Sûfis were a sect of pantheists and mystics.

² The new moon, that is, which signifies the end of fasting, and prompts the porter to resume his task—presumably of carrying in the wine.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XC I

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
 And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XC II

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
 As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

XC III

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
 Have drowned my Glcry in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XC IV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
 And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My threadbare Penitence apieces tore.

XC V

And much as Wine has played the Infidel,
And robbed me of my Robe of Honor—Well,
 I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

XCVII

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, revealed,
To which the fainting Traveler might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

XCVIII

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

And when like her, oh Sáki,¹ you shall pass
 Among the Guests Star-scattered on the Grass,
 And in your joyous errand reach thè spot
 Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

Edward Fitzgerald

257

RABBI BEN EZRA²

GROW old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made:
 Our times are in his hand
 Who saith, "A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
 Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
 Not that, admiring stars,
 It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
 Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!³
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

¹ Cupbearer.

² Although represented as the words of an eleventh-century rabbi, the poem is an accepted expression of the philosophy of its author.

³ The remonstrance referred to is presumably the disparagement of youth which is implied in the first stanza.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast;
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed
 beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play? ¹
To man, propose this test—

¹ Perhaps: whose spirit works only in the interest of bodily satisfactions.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once, "How good to live and learn?"

Not once beat, "Praise be thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too;
Perfect I call thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,¹
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

¹ That is, with certainty.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,¹
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,

¹ The potter's wheel is "a revolving horizontal disk [made of wood] on which the lump of clay [out of which the pot is to be made] is thrown, and this lump is shaped by revolution. The disk is revolved by a treadle which the workman operates with his foot, and which is turned through a few degrees of the circle, or more rapidly through the whole circle, as conditions require. Into the lump of clay the potter thrusts his thumbs, and by drawing them upward and outward he rapidly reduces the whirling mass to the form of a vessel. The inside is smoothed by pressing a wet sponge against the surface, and the outside by a strip of leather, while the vessel is revolving. It is now released from the disk by means of a piece of wire which cuts the clay from the wood, and is then put on a board to dry . . ." (From the article on pottery in *The New International Encyclopædia*. Reprinted through special arrangement with Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.)

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress? ¹

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's
wheel?

¹ The image implied is probably that of the clay vessel, now molded into shape, still revolving on the wheel, and receiving, for decorative purposes, the impression produced by pointed objects held firmly against its surface. *Grooves*, in the first line of the stanza, may be inadvertently used to name the instruments which make the grooves.

But I need, now as then,
 Thee, God, who moldest men;
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
 Did I—to the wheel of life
 With shapes and colors rife,
 Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy thirst:

So, take and use thy work,
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
 My times be in thy hand!
 Perfect the cup as planned!
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

Robert Browning

258

GROWING OLD

WHAT is it to grow old?
 Is it to lose the glory of the form,
 The luster of the eye?
 Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
 —Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
 Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay?
 Is it to feel each limb
 Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
 Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more! but not,
 Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dreamed 'twould be!
 'Tis not to have our life
 Mellowed and softened as with sunset-glow,
 A golden day's decline.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

'Tis not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
And heart profoundly stirred;
And weep, and feel the fullness of the past,
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

Matthew Arnold

259

TERMINUS¹

I T is time to be old,
To take in sail:—
The god of bounds,
Who sets to seas a shore,
Came to me in his fatal rounds,
And said: "No more!"

¹ Terminus was the Roman "god of bounds."

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

No farther shoot
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.
Fancy departs: no more invent;
Contract thy firmament
To compass of a tent.
There's not enough for this and that,
Make thy option which of two;
Economize the failing river,
Not the less revere the Giver,
Leave the many and hold the few.
Timely wise accept the terms,
Soften the fall with wary foot;
A little while
Still plan and smile,
And,—fault of novel germs,—
Mature the unfallen fruit.
Curse, if thou wilt, thy sires,
Bad husbands of their fires,
Who, when they gave thee breath,
Failed to bequeath
The needful sinew stark as once,
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins,—
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,
Amid the gladiators, halt and numb.”

As the bird trims her to the gale,
I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:

“Lowly faithful, banish fear,
 Right onward drive unharmed;
 The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
 And every wave is charmed.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

260

WHERE lies the land to which the ship would go?
 Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
 And where the land she travels from? Away,
 Far, far behind, is all that they can say.
 On sunny noons upon the deck's smooth face,
 Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to pace;
 Or, o'er the stern reclining, watch below
 The foaming wake far widening as we go.
 On stormy nights when wild northwesterners rave,
 How proud a thing to fight with wind and wave!
 The dripping sailor on the reeling mast
 Exults to bear, and scorns to wish it past.
 Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
 Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
 And where the land she travels from? Away,
 Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

Arthur Hugh Clough

261

THE IDEAL¹

IF here our life be briefer than a day
 In time Eternal, if the circling year
 Drive on our days never to reappear,
 If birth be but the prelude to decay,
 What think you, soul, incarcerate in clay?
 Why are you glad, at our dark daylight here,

¹ The translation is by George Wyndham, and is reprinted with the permission of Macmillan & Co., Ltd.

If for the flight to an abode more clear
 Your strong wings are well feathered to upstay?
 There, is the good that every mind desires,
 There, rest whereunto all the world aspires,
 There love is, there of pleasure, too, full worth:
 There, O my soul, led on to Heaven's last height,
 The very self of Beauty in thy sight
 Shall seem the image worshiped upon earth.

Joachim du Bellay

262

DOVER BEACH

THE sea is calm to-night,
 The tide is full, the moon lies fair
 Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
 Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
 Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
 Only, from the long line of spray
 Where the sea meets the moon-blanchèd land,
 Listen! you hear the grating roar
 Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
 At their return, up the high strand,
 Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
 With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
 The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
 Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
 Of human misery; we
 Find also in the sound a thought,
 Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold

263

I STROVE with none, for none was worth my strife;
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Walter Savage Landor

264

THE PALACE OF ART¹

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well."

¹ Abridged.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnished brass,
I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf
The rock rose clear, or winding stair.
My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.

And "While the world runs round and round," I said,
"Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring."

To which my soul made answer readily:
"Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal-rich and wide."

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
Thro' which the livelong day my soul did pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
All various, each a perfect whole
From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and blue,
Showing a gaudy summer morn,
Where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blew
His wreathed bugle-horn.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

One seemed all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One showed an iron coast and angry waves,
You seemed to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones and slags;
Beyond, a line of heights; and higher,
All barred with long white cloud, the scornful crags;
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight poured
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there,
Not less than truth designed.

Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
 Moved of themselves, with silver sounds;
 And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
 The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
 Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
 And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,
 And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest;
 A million wrinkles carved his skin;
 A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,
 From cheek and throat and chin.¹

And thro' the topmost oriels' colored flame
 Two godlike faces gazed below:
 Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulam,²
 The first of those who know.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong
 Her low preamble all alone,
 More than my soul to hear her echoed song
 Throb thro' the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
 Joying to feel herself alive,
 Lord over Nature, lord of the visible earth,
 Lord of the senses five;

Communing with herself: "All these are mine,
 And let the world have peace or wars,

¹ Homer.

² Francis Bacon.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

'Tis one to me." She—when young night divine
Crowned dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollowed moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapped her hands and cried,
"I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich and wide
Be flattered to the height.

"O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
O shapes and hues that please me well!
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

"O Godlike isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep."

Then of the moral instinct would she prate
And of the rising from the dead,
As hers by right of full-accomplished Fate;
And at the last she said:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed.
 I care not what the sects may brawl.
 I sit as God, holding no form of creed,
 But contemplating all."

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
 Flashed thro' her as she sat alone,
 Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
 And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prospered; so three years
 She prospered; on the fourth she fell,
 Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
 Struck thro' with pangs of hell.¹

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
 God, before whom ever lie bare
 The abysmal deeps of personality,
 Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turned her sight
 The airy hand confusion wrought,
 Wrote, "Mene, mene," and divided quite
 The kingdom of her thought.²

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
 Fell on her, from which mood was born
 Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
 Laughter at her self-scorn.

¹ "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."—*Acts*, xii.

² King Belshazzar, at a great feast that he had made, was terrified by the appearance of fingers of a man's hand, which came forth and wrote upon the wall. The inscription, which began with "Mene, mene," foretold the downfall of Belshazzar's kingdom. See *Daniel*, v.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

“What! is not this my place of strength,” she said,
“My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
Since my first memory?”

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,
That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seemed my soul,
Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal;

A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand,
Left on the shore, that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white;

A star that with the choral starry dance
Joined not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Rolled round by one fixed law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curled.
“No voice,” she shrieked in that lone hall,
“No voice breaks thro’ the stillness of this world;
One deep, deep silence all!”

She, moldering with the dull earth's moldering sod,
 Inwrapt tenfold in slothful shame,
 Lay there exiled from eternal God,
 Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
 And nothing saw, for her despair,
 But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
 No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
 And ever worse with growing time,
 And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
 And all alone in crime.

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
 With blackness as a solid wall,
 Far off she seemed to hear the dully sound
 Of human footsteps fall;

As in strange lands a traveler walking slow,
 In doubt and great perplexity,
 A little before moonrise hears the low
 Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
 Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
 Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, "I have found
 A new land, but I die."

She howled aloud, "I am on fire within.
 There comes no murmur of reply.
 What is it that will take away my sin,
 And save me lest I die?"

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.
“Make me a cottage in the vale,” she said,
“Where I may mourn and pray.

“Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built;
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.”

Alfred Tennyson

265 NATURE AND THE POET

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE IN A STORM,
PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT

I WAS thy neighbor once, thou rugged Pile!
I Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:
I saw thee every day; and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!
So like, so very like, was day to day!
Whene'er I looked, thy image still was there;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm! It seemed no sleep,
No mood, which season takes away, or brings:
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle things.

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream,—

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile,
Amid a world how different from this!
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

A picture had it been of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such picture would I at that time have made;
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the Friend,
If he had lived, of him whom I deplore,
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate work!—yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That hulk which labors in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
 I love to see the look with which it braves,
 Cased in the unfeeling armor of old time,
 The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
 Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
 Such happiness, wherever it be known,
 Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
 And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
 Such sights, or worse, as are before me here:—
 Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

William Wordsworth

266

THE JUST MAN¹

HE that is just and firm of will
 Doth not before the fury quake
 Of mobs that instigate to ill,
 Nor hath the tyrant's menace skill
 His fixed resolve to shake;

Nor Auster, at whose wild command
 The Adriatic billows dash,
 Nor Jove's dread thunder-launching hand:
 Yea, if the globe should fall, he'll stand
 Serene amidst the crash.

Horace

¹ The beginning of the third ode of the third book. Translated by Sir Theodore Martin.

267 CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

HOW happy is he born or taught
 That serveth not another's will;
 Whose armor is his honest thought,
 And silly truth his highest skill!

Whose passions not his masters are,
 Whose soul is still prepared for death;
 Untied unto the world with care
 Of princely love or vulgar breath;

Who hath his life from rumors freed,
 Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
 Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
 Nor ruin make accusers great;

Who envieth none whom chance doth raise
 Or vice; who never understood
 How deepest wounds are given with praise;
 Nor rules of state, but rules of good;

Who God doth late and early pray
 More of his grace than gifts to lend;
 Who entertains the harmless day
 With a well-chosen book or friend;

—This man is free from servile bands
 Of hope to rise, or fear to fall;
 Lord of himself, though not of lands;
 And having nothing, he hath all.

Sir Henry Wotton

268 CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR

WHO is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright:
Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
But makes his moral being his prime care;
Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,
And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower;
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives;
By objects, which might force the soul to abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate;
Is placable—because occasions rise
So often that demand such sacrifice;
More skillful in self-knowledge, even more pure,
As tempted more; more able to endure,
As more exposed to suffering and distress;
Thence, also more alive to tenderness.
'Tis he whose law is reason; who depends
Upon that law as on the best of friends;
Whence, in a state where men are tempted still
To evil for a guard against worse ill,
And what in quality or act is best

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Doth seldom on a right foundation rest,
 He labors good on good to fix, and owes
 To virtue every triumph that he knows;
 Who, if he rise to station of command,
 Rises by open means; and there will stand
 On honorable terms, or else retire,
 And in himself possess his own desire;
 Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
 Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim;
 And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait
 For wealth or honors, or for worldly state;
 Whom they must follow; on whose head must fall,
 Like showers of manna, if they come at all:
 Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
 Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
 A constant influence, a peculiar grace;
 But who, if he be called upon to face
 Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
 Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
 Is happy as a lover; and attired
 With sudden brightness, like a man inspired;
 And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law
 In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;
 Or if an unexpected call succeed,
 Come when it will, is equal to the need:
 He who, though thus endued as with a sense
 And faculty for storm and turbulence,
 Is yet a soul whose master-bias leans
 To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
 Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
 Arc at his heart; and such fidelity
 It is his darling passion to approve;
 More brave for this that he hath much to love:—
 'Tis, finally, the man, who, lifted high,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Conspicuous object in a nation's eye,
Or left unthought-of in obscurity,—
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not,
Plays, in the many games of life, that one
Where what he most doth value must be won:
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,
Nor thought of tender happiness betray;
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpassed:
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must fall to sleep without his fame,
And leave a dead unprofitable name,
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause:
This is the happy Warrior; this is he
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.

William Wordsworth

269 THE WISE MAN'S PRIVILEGE¹

SWEET, when the great sea's water is stirred to his depths
by the storm-winds,
Standing ashore to descry one afar-off mightily struggling:
Not that a neighbor's sorrow to you yields dulcet enjoyment;
But that the sight hath a sweetness, of ills ourselves are exempt
from.

Sweet 'tis to behold, on a broad plain mustering, war-hosts

¹ From the second book of the *De Rerum Natura*. The translation is by Charles Stuart Calverley, and is reprinted with the permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Arm them for some great battle, one's self unscathed by the
danger:—

Yet still happier this:—To possess, impregnably guarded,
Those calm heights of the sages, which have for an origin
Wisdom;

Thence to survey our fellows, observe them this way and that
way

Wander amidst Life's paths, poor stragglers seeking a highway:
Watch mind battle with mind, and escutcheon rival escutcheon;
Gaze on that untold strife, which is waged 'neath the sun and
the starlight,

Up as they toil on the surface whereon rest Riches and Empire.

Lucretius

270 THE RIDDLE OF THE WORLD¹

KNOW then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused, or disabused;

¹ From the *Essay on Man*. With this passage may be compared certain "Thoughts" of Pascal. See *Prose*, pp. 307 ff., *passim*.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Alexander Pope

271

THE TWO DESERTS¹

NOT greatly moved with awe am I
To learn that we may spy
Five thousand firmaments beyond our own.
The best that's known
Of the heavenly bodies does them credit small.
Viewed close, the Moon's fair ball
Is of ill objects worst,
A corpse in Night's highway, naked, fire-scarred, accurst;
And now they tell
That the Sun is plainly seen to boil and burst
Too horribly for Hell.
So, judging from these two,
As we must do,
The Universe, outside our living Earth,
Was all conceived in the Creator's mirth,
Forecasting at the time Man's spirit deep,
To make dirt cheap.
Put by the Telescope!
Better without it man may see,
Stretched awful in the hushed midnight,
The ghost of his eternity.
Give me the nobler glass that swells to the eye
The things which near us lie,
Till Science rapturously hails,
In the minutest water-drop,

¹ Reprinted with the permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

A torment of innumerable tails.
 These at the least do live.
 But rather give
 A mind not much to pry
 Beyond our royal-fair estate
 Betwixt these deserts blank of small and great.
 Wonder and beauty our own courtiers are,
 Pressing to catch our gaze,
 And out of obvious ways
 Ne'er wandering far.

Coventry Patmore

272

TWO RIVERS

THY summer voice, Musketaquit,
 Repeats the music of the rain;
 But sweeter rivers pulsing flit
 Through thee, as thou through Concord Plain.

Thou in thy narrow banks art pent:
 The stream I love unbounded goes
 Through flood and sea and firmament;
 Through light, through life, it forward flows.

I see the inundation sweet,
 I hear the spending of the stream
 Through years, through men, through Nature fleet,
 Through love and thought, through power and dream.

Musketaquit, a goblin strong,
 Of shard and flint makes jewels gay;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

They lose their grief who hear his song,
And where he winds is the day of day.

So forth and brighter fares my stream,—
Who drink it shall not thirst again;
No darkness stains its equal gleam,
And ages drop in it like rain.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

273

BRAHMA

IF the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I

ONE walketh in Renunciation's way;
 Another fain would pay
 In Worldly Wisdom all his soul's large debt;
 And one in Pleasure's path
 With love still wandering on would all forget:—
 Three roads the wide world hath.

II

IN many a cavern on the wild hill-slopes
 That near to heaven climb,
 By many a pool, dwell eremites with hopes
 That laugh at measured time.

They lave in the cool Gangâ where it flows
 Over the level rocks;
 They peer among the trees where Çiva² goes
 Tossing his matted locks;

They breathe in joy: but we—alas that fate
 Made woman's love so fair!
 For love restrains us in a world we hate,
 Cajoled by woman's snare.

. III

THE silvery laughter; eyes that sparkle bold,
 Or droop in virgin rue;

¹ Selected from *A Century of Indian Epigrams, chiefly from the Sanskrit of Bhartrihari*, by Paul Elmer More. Reprinted with the consent of Mr. More, and by permission of, and by special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company, the authorized publishers.

² An Indian god.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The prattling words of wonder uncontrolled
When world and life are new;

The startled flight and dallying slow return,
And all their girlish sport,—
Ah me, that they time's ruinous truth must learn,
Their flowering be so short!

IV

LOVE'S fruit in all the world is only this,
That two as one should think;
And they that disagree yet woo love's bliss,
Dead corpse with corpse would link.

V

A TRAVELER pausing at the village well,
His hollowed palms a cup,
Bends down to drink, but caught as by a spell,
With thirst unslaked looks up.

And the fair keeper of the fountain stands,
Her girlish laughter stilled,
Nor careth from her urn into his hands
How thin a stream is spilled.

VI

NOW judge ye!—For a girl I walked forlorn
Who laughed my vows to scorn;
She loved another, who in coin repaid,
Wooing a second maid.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And she, this second, making all complete,
Would worship at my feet.—
Four pretty fools and Kâma¹ with his malice
Thus drove me from my palace.

VII

COMMUNION with the good is friendship's root,
That dieth not until our death;
And on the boughs hang ever golden fruit:—
And this is friendship, the world saith.

Ourselves we doubt, our hearts we hardly know,
We lean for guidance on a friend;
Ay, on a righteous man we'd fain bestow
Our faith, and follow to the end.

VIII

A FRIEND or stranger comes he?—so
They reckon of the narrow mind;
But some of broader reason know
In all the world one kith and kind.

IX

WIL from the sand a man may strain,
If chance he squeeze with might and main;
The pilgrim at the magic well
Of the mirage his desert thirst may quell.

So traveling far a man by luck
May find a hare horned like a buck;—
But who by art may straighten out
The crooked counsels of a stubborn lout?

¹ The Indian god of love.

X

THE god hath wove for ignorance a cloak
 That he who will may wear;
 And mantled thus amid the wisest folk
 Fools may unchallenged fare:—
 Be silent! over all that words afford,
 Silence hath its reward.

XI

WISDOM acquire and knowledge hive,
 As thou a thousand years mightst thrive;
 For virtue toil with sleepless care,
 As Death already grasped thee by the hair.

XII

LIKE as our outworn garments we discard,
 And other new ones don;
 So doth the Soul these bodies doff when marred,
 And others new put on.

Fire doth not kindle It, nor sword divides,
 Nor winds nor waters harm;
 Eternal and unchanged the One abides,
 And smiles at all alarm.

XIII

THE harvest ripens as the seed was sown,
 And he that scattered reaps alone;—
 So from each deed there falls a germ
 That shall in coming lives its source affirm.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

UNSEEN they call it, for it lurks
The hidden spring of present works;
UNKNOWN BEFORE, even as the fruit
Was undiscovered in the vital root.

And he that now impure hath been
Impure shall be, the clean be clean;
We wrestle in our present state
With bonds ourselves we forged,—and call it Fate.

XIV

SEATED within this body's car
The silent Self is driven afar;
And the five senses at the pole
Like steeds are tugging restive of control.

And if the driver lose his way,
Or the reins sunder, who can say
In what blind paths, what pits of fear
Will plunge the chargers in their mad career?

Drive well, O Mind, use all thy art,
Thou charioteer!—O feeling Heart,
Be thou a bridle firm and strong!
For the Lord rideth and the way is long.

XV

ALONE each mortal first draws breath;
Alone goes down the way of death;
Alone he tastes the bitter food
Of evil deeds, alone the fruit of good.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

They cast him in the earth away,
They leave him as a lump of clay,
They turn their faces, they are sped,
And only Virtue follows,—he is dead.

So garner Virtue till the end
As 'twere our only guide and friend;
With it alone, when all is lost,
We cross the darkness, ah, so hardly crost.

XVI

LIFE like the billow rolls, and youthful bloom
Finds in a day its doom;
Wealth fleeter is than fancy; pleasure's lash
Is but the lightning flash;
And these dear arms that hold our neck, beguile,
Ah, but a little while:—
Rest then the heart in Brahma till we cross
This sea of being where all errors toss.

XVII

ONE boasted: "Lo, the earth my bed,
This arm a pillow for my head,
The moon my lantern, and the sky
Stretched o'er me like a purple canopy.

"No slave-girls have I, but all night
The four winds fan my slumbers light."—
And I astonished: Like a lord
This beggar sleeps; what more could wealth afford?

XVIII

DEAR Heart, I go a journey, yet before
 Would speak this counsel, for I come no more:
 One love our life had, yet a greater still
 The Spirit must fulfill.

Not now the wife is dear for love of wife,
 But for the Self; and this our golden life
 For life no more we treasure, it is dear
 For that the Self dwells here.

And this beguiling world, the starry dome
 Of purple and the gods who call it home,
 Man, beast, and flowers that blow and blowing perish,
 Not for themselves we cherish,

But for the Self. And this is love, and they
 Who look for other on the lonely way
 Are still forsaken.—Tremble not, dear Heart!
 Love stays though I depart.

XIX

COURAGE, my Soul! now to the silent wood
 Alone we wander, there to seek our food
 In the wild fruits, and woo our dreamless sleep
 On soft boughs gathered deep.

There loud authority in folly bold,
 And tongues that stammer with disease of gold,
 And murmur of the windy world shall cease,
 Nor echo through our peace.

XX

WHO is the Brahmin?—Not the mother's womb
 Declares him, nor the robes that all assume;
 But the true heart that never greed beguiles,
 Nor turbid lust defiles.

Who is the Brahmin?—He who trembleth not
 When snaps the cord that bound to human lot,
 Who losing all is glad, whose peace is known
 Unto himself alone.

XXI

O MOTHER earth! O father air! O light,
 My friend! O kindred water! and thou height
 Of skies, my brother!—crying unto you,
 Crying, I plead adieu.

Well have I wrought among you,—now the day
 Of Wisdom dawning strikes old Error's sway,
 And the light breaks, and the long-waiting soul
 Greeteth her blissful goal.

Bhartrihari

275

AN ENGLISH NIGHT

THE sky is overcast
 With a continuous cloud of texture close,
 Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
 Which through that veil is indistinctly seen,
 A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
 So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
 Chequering the ground—from rock, plant, tree, or tower.
 At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam

Startles the pensive traveler while he treads
 His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
 Bent earthward; he looks up—the clouds are split
 Asunder,—and above his head he sees
 The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
 There in a black-blue vault she sails along,
 Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small,
 And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
 Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away,
 Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
 But they are silent;—still they roll along
 Immeasurably distant; and the vault,
 Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
 Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
 At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
 Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
 Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
 Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

William Wordsworth

276 INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE
 IMAGINATION IN BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

WISDOM and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
 And giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion! not in vain,
 By day or starlight, thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature; purifying thus

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear,—until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapors rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon; and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
The cottage-windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village-clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud:
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,

Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star;
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

William Wordsworth

277

THERE was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.—And they would shout

Across the watery vale, and shout again,
 Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
 And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
 Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
 Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause
 Of silence such as baffled his best skill,
 Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
 Would enter unawares into his mind
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
 Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale
 Where he was born and bred: the churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village-school;
 And through that church-yard when my way has led
 On summer-evenings, I believe that there
 A long half-hour together I have stood
 Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies!

William Wordsworth

TO MY SISTER

IT is the first mild day of March:
 Each minute sweeter than before
 The redbreast sings from the tall larch
 That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,
 Which seems a sense of joy to yield

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine),
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste, your morning task resign;
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you;—and, pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year.

Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
—It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than years of toiling reason:
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come may take
Our temper from to-day.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

William Wordsworth

279

LINES

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY ON REVISITING
THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR,
JULY 13, 1798

FIVE years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke

Sent up in silence, from among the trees!
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
 Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
 The hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,

Through a long absence, have not been to me
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and, mid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
 And passing even into my purer mind,
 With tranquil restoration:—feelings, too,
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
 As have no slight or trivial influence
 On that best portion of a good man's life,
 His little, nameless, unremembered acts
 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
 To them I may have owed another gift,
 Of aspect more sublime—that blessed mood,
 In which the burden of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things.

If this

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest

Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
 And all its aching joys are now no more,
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
 The still, sad music of humanity,
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,
 And mountains; and of all that we behold
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world
 Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognize,
 In nature and the language of the sense,
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
 Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more
 Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
 For thou art with me here upon the banks
 Of this fair river; thou, my dearest Friend,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget

That on the banks of this delightful stream
 We stood together; and that I, so long
 A worshiper of Nature, hither came
 Unwearied in that service: rather say
 With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
 Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
 That after many wanderings, many years
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

William Wordsworth

280 ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD¹

I

The Poet states a cause of sorrow: *A glory which I once saw I can no longer see.*

THERE was a time when meadow, grove,
 and stream,
 The earth, and every common sight,
 To me did seem
 Apparelled in celestial light,
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.
 It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,
 By night or day,
 The things which I have seen I now can
 see no more.

¹ In Plato's *Phædo* a speaker thus addresses Socrates (Jowett's translation): "Your favorite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we learned that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our soul was in some place before existing in the human form; here then is another argument of the soul's immortality."

The marginal analysis of the poem is supplied by the present editors.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

II

The Poet restates
the idea: *The world
is indeed beautiful,
but I have neverthe-
less suffered a loss.*

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are
bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from
the earth.

III

The Poet recovers
his joy: *Now that I
have expressed the
grief which came to
me, I again give my-
self to happiness.*

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous
song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the
steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season
wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains
throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of
sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May

Doth every beast keep holiday;—
 Thou child of joy,
 Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts,
 thou happy shepherd-boy!

IV

The Poet, after continuing for a time in his joy, is once more made sorrowful: *In the presence of the beauty and charm of nature, I am filled with pleasure;—but, alas! I am reminded of my grievous loss.*

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
 Ye to each other make; I see
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee:

My heart is at your festival,
 My head hath its coronal,
 The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel
 it all.

Oh evil day! if I were sullen
 While Earth herself is adorning,
 This sweet May-morning,
 And the children are culling
 On every side,
 In a thousand valleys far and wide,
 Fresh flowers; while the sun shines
 warm,

And the babe leaps up on his mother's
 arm—

I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
 —But there's a tree, of many one,
 A single field which I have looked upon,
 Both of them speak of something that is
 gone:

The pansy at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat:
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

V

The Poet now explains the change which he mourns—the inference to which he is led being the primary theme of the poem and the substance of its title: *We bring with us into this world some portion of the divinity which was about us in a former existence; of this we are aware in childhood, but gradually, as we come to manhood, we see it fade away and vanish.*

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it
flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the
east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI

The Poet continues the explanation: *Earth — ministering to the senses — does all she can to cause the disappearance of the heaven that lies about us in our infancy.*

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her
own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural
kind,
And, even with something of a mother's
mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can

To make her foster-child, her inmate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII

The Poet presents
 in another way the
 sad history of man:
*The child, maturing,
 and at last growing
 old, busies himself
 in succession with
 the ancient round of
 activities, imitating
 endlessly the cus-
 tomary doings of
 mankind.*

Behold the Child among his new-born
 blisses,

A six years' darling of a pigmy size!

See, where 'mid work of his own hand he
 lies,

Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
 With light upon him from his father's eyes!

See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
 Some fragment from his dream of human
 life,

Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;

A wedding or a festival,

A mourning or a funeral;

And this hath now his heart,

And unto this he frames his song:

Then will he fit his tongue

To dialogues of business, love, or strife;

But it will not be long

Ere this be thrown aside,

And with new joy and pride

The little actor cons another part;

Filling from time to time his "humorous
 stage"

With all the persons, down to palsied Age,

That Life brings with her in her equipage;

As if his whole vocation

Were endless imitation.

VIII

The Poet, moved
by contemplation of
this history, apostro-
phizes the child:
*Why dost thou, O
Child, best of phi-
losophers, having as
a quality of thy
childhood the highest
wisdom, hasten into
the life of habit and
convention?*

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal
deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's
height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou pro-
voke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly
freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

The mood changes,
for the Poet comforts
himself in his sor-
row: *There is yet
reason for joy, in
that we had in child-
hood, and can still*

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

remember, high instincts and obstinate questionings.

The thought of our past years in me doth
breed

Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in
his breast:—

Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal
nature

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to
make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,

Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!

Hence, in a season of calm weather,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling ever-
more.

x

The Poet exults in the pleasure which the thought brings, and inspired by his happiness finds a further ground for consolation: *Then let all nature be glad! Though the bright radiance be gone, we shall find strength in what remains.*

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous
song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once
so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the
hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the
flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death;
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

The Poet continues to find justification for his new-found joy: *And, in truth, my love of nature is still left to me and has added to itself a sober quality born of my experience of human life.*

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and
groves,
Forbode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their chan-
nels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as
they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting
sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms
are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we
live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can
give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for
tears.

William Wordsworth

281 TO AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER

WHO PREACHED THAT WE SHOULD BE "IN HARMONY WITH
NATURE"

"IN harmony with Nature"? Restless fool,
 I Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
 When true, the last impossibility;
 To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool:—
 Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
 And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good. .
 Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
 Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
 Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
 Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;
 Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.
 Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
 Nature and man can never be fast friends.
 Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

Matthew Arnold

MORALITY

WE cannot kindle when we will
 The fire which in the heart resides,
 The spirit bloweth and is still,
 In mystery our soul abides;
 But tasks in hours of insight willed
 Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
 We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
 We bear the burden and the heat

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* viewed thy self-control,
Thy struggling, tasked morality—
Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek!
“Ah, child!” she cries, “that strife divine,
Whence was it, for it is not mine?

“There is no effort on *my* brow—
I do not strive, I do not weep;
I rush with the swift spheres and glow
In joy, and, when I will, I sleep!
Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where?

“I knew not yet the gauge of time,
Nor wore the manacles of space;
I felt it in some other clime!
I saw it in some other place!
'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
And lay upon the breast of God.”

Matthew Arnold

CLEAR, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
 With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
 Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
 Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
 This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
 To waft me from distraction; once I loved
 Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
 Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
 That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

It is the hush of night, and all between
 Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
 Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
 Save darkened Jura, whose cap heights appear
 Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
 There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
 Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
 Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
 Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more;

He is an evening reveler, who makes
 His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
 At intervals, some bird from out the brakes
 Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
 There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
 But that is fancy, for the starlight dew
 All silently their tears of love instill,
 Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
 Deep into nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

¹ From the third canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All heaven and earth are still: from the high host
Of stars, to the lulled lake and mountain coast,
All is centered in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defense.

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty:—'twould disarm
The specter Death, had he substantial power to harm.

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places, and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The Spirit, in whose honor shrines are weak,
Upreared of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh, night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

And this is in the night:—most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 'tis black,—and now the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted;
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed:

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters,—war within themselves to wage:

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunderbolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around; of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath forked
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation worked,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurked.

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightning! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, O tempests! is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

Lord Byron

THERE is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
 There is society, where none intrudes,
 By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
 I love not man the less, but nature more,
 From these our interviews, in which I steal
 From all I may be, or have been before,
 To mingle with the universe, and feel
 What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean,—roll!
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
 Man marks the earth with ruin,—his control
 Stops with the shore;—upon the watery plain
 The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
 A shadow of man's ravage save his own,
 When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
 He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
 Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
 Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
 And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
 For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
 Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
 And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
 And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
 His petty hope in some near port or bay,
 And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

¹ From the fourth canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee and arbiter of war,—
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee;
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters washed them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts: not so thou;
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play,
Time writes no wrinkles on thine azure brow;
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed,—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving; boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of Eternity,—the throne
Of the Invisible! even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward; from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers,—they to me

Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
 Made them a terror, 'twas a pleasing fear;
 For I was as it were a child of thee,
 And trusted to thy billows far and near,
 And laid my hand upon thy mane,—as I do here.

Lord Byron

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THE COLISEUM

ROME ¹

ARCHES on arches! as it were that Rome,
 A Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
 Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
 Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine
 As 'twere its natural torches, for divine
 Should be the light which streams here, to illumine
 This long-explored but still exhaustless mine
 Of contemplation; and the azure gloom
 Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume

Hues which have words, and speak to ye of heaven,
 Floats o'er this vast and wondrous monument,
 And shadows forth its glory. There is given
 Unto the things of earth which Time hath bent
 A spirit's feeling, and where he hath leant
 His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
 And magic in the ruined battlement,
 For which the palace of the present hour
 Must yield its pomp and wait till ages are its dower.

And here the buzz of eager nations ran,
 In murmured pity, or loud-roared applause,

¹ From the fourth canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. A digression, following the second stanza, is omitted.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

As man was slaughtered by his fellowman.
 And wherefore slaughtered? wherefore, but because
 Such were the bloody Circus' genial laws,
 And the imperial pleasure.—Wherefore not?
 What matters where we fall to fill the maws
 Of worms,—on battle-plains or listed spot?
 Both are but theaters where the chief actors rot.

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
 He leans upon his hand,—his manly brow
 Consents to death, but conquers agony,
 And his drooped head sinks gradually low,—
 And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
 From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
 Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
 The arena swims around him,—he is gone,
 Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who
 won.

He heard it, but he heeded not,—his eyes
 Were with his heart, and that was far away.
 He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,
 But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother,—he, their sire,
 Butchered to make a Roman holiday!—
 All this rushed with his blood.—Shall he expire
 And unavenged?—Arise, ye Goths, and glut your ire!

But here, where Murder breathed her bloody steam;
 And here, where buzzing nations choked the ways,
 And roared or murmured like a mountain stream
 Dashing or winding as its torrent strays;
 Here, where the Roman millions' blame or praise
 Was death or life, the playthings of a crowd,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

My voice sounds much,—and fall the stars' faint rays
On the arena void—seats crushed—walls bowed—
And galleries, where my steps seem echoes strangely loud.

A ruin,—yet what ruin! From its mass
Walls, palaces, half-cities, have been reared;
Yet oft the enormous skeleton ye pass,
And marvel where the spoil could have appeared.
Hath it indeed been plundered, or but cleared?
Alas! developed, opens the decay,
When the colossal fabric's form is neared:
It will not bear the brightness of the day,
Which streams too much on all years, man, have reft away.

But when the rising moon begins to climb
Its topmost arch, and gently pauses there;
When the stars twinkle through the loops of time,
And the low night-breeze waves along the air
The garland-forest, which the gray walls wear,
Like laurels on the bald first Cæsar's head;
When the light shines serene, but doth not glare,—
Then in this magic circle raise the dead:
Heroes have trod this spot,—'tis on their dust ye tread.

“While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;
And when Rome falls—the World.” From our own land
Thus spake the pilgrims o'er this mighty wall
In Saxon times, which we are wont to call
Ancient; and these three mortal things are still
On their foundations, and unaltered all;
Rome and her Ruin past Redemption's skill,
The World, the same wide den—of thieves, or what ye will.

Lord Byron

SWEET Auburn! loveliest village of the plain;
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighboring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labor free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round.
And still, as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down;
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place;
The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,

¹ Abridged.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.
These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please:
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed:
These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled.

Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.¹
Here, as I take my solitary rounds
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,
In all my griefs—and God has given my share—
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose;
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill,
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;
And, as an hare whom hounds and horns pursue
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

¹ It was Goldsmith's conviction that the rich, by selfishly building up for themselves large estates, and by enclosing tracts of land which had hitherto been a common possession of all the people, were driving the poor from the countryside and causing charming villages, such as "Sweet Auburn," to fall into sad decay.

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close
 Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
 There, as I passed with careless steps and slow,
 The mingling notes came softened from below;
 The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,
 The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
 The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
 The playful children just let loose from school,
 The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
 And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind;—
 These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
 And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
 But now the sounds of population fail,
 No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
 No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,
 For all the bloomy flush of life is fled;—
 All but yon widowed, solitary thing,
 That feebly bends beside the plashy spring:
 She, wretched matron, forced in age, for bread,
 To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,
 To pick her wintry faggot from the thorn,
 To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn;
 She only left of all the harmless train,
 The sad historian of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
 A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Unpracticed he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings but relieved their pain:
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by the fire, and talked the night away,
Wept o'er his wounds or, tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismayed,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
 His looks adorned the venerable place;
 Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
 And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
 The service past, around the pious man,
 With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
 Even children followed with endearing wile,
 And plucked his gown to share the good man's smile.
 His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed;
 Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed:
 To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
 But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
 As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
 With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
 There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
 The village master taught his little school.
 A man severe he was, and stern to view;
 I knew him well, and every truant knew;
 Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face;
 Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
 Full well the busy whisper circling round
 Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned.
 Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,
 The love he bore to learning was in fault;
 The village all declared how much he knew:
 'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
And even the story ran that he could gauge;
In arguing, too, the parson owned his skill,
For, even though vanquished, he could argue still;
While words of learned length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.

But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumphed is forgot.
Near yonder thorn that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where graybeard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round.
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlor splendors of that festive place:
The white-washed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;
The pictures placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose;
The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
With aspen boughs and flowers and fennel gay;
While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.

Vain transitory splendors! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.

Thither no more the peasant shall repair
 To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
 No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
 No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
 No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
 Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
 The host himself no longer shall be found
 Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
 Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
 Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
 These simple blessings of the lowly train;
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
 One native charm, than all the gloss of art.
 Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
 The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;
 Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
 Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.
 But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
 With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed—
 In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
 The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;
 And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,
 The heart distrusting asks if this be joy.

Oliver Goldsmith

THE Village Life, and every care that reigns
 O'er youthful peasants and declining swains;
 What labor yields, and what, that labor past,
 Age, in its hour of languor, finds at last;

¹ From the first book of *The Village*.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song—the Muse can give no more.

.
I grant, indeed, that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the midday sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune, yet sustain their parts:—
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide,
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?

No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast,
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast;
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
And other shepherds dwell with other mates;
By such examples taught, I paint the cot,
As Truth will paint it and as bards will not:
Nor you, ye poor, of lettered scorn complain,
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
O'ercome by labor, and bowed down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
Can poets soothe you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruined shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighb'ring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye:

There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
 And to the ragged infant threaten war;
 There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil;
 There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
 Hardy and high, above the slender sheaf,
 The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
 O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
 And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;
 With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
 And a sad splendor vainly shines around.

Or will you deem them¹ amply paid in health,
 Labor's fair child that languishes with wealth?
 Go then! and see them rising with the sun,
 Through a long course of daily toil to run;
 See them beneath the dog-star's raging heat,
 When the knees tremble and the temples beat;
 Behold them, leaning on their scythes, look o'er
 The labor past, and toils to come explore;
 See them alternate suns and showers engage,
 And hoard up aches and anguish for their age;
 Through fens and marshy moors their steps pursue,
 When their warm pores imbibe the evening dew;
 Then own that labor may as fatal be
 To these thy slaves as thine excess to thee.

Amid this tribe too oft a manly pride
 Strives in strong toil the fainting heart to hide;
 There may you see the youth of slender frame
 Contend with weakness, weariness, and shame;
 Yet, urged along, and proudly loath to yield,
 He strives to join his fellows of the field:
 Till long-contending Nature droops at last,

¹ That is, the poor.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Declining health rejects his poor repast,
His cheerless spouse the coming danger sees,
And mutual murmurs urge the slow disease.

Yet grant them health, 'tis not for us to tell,
Though the head droops not, that the heart is well;
Or will you praise that homely, healthy fare,
Plenteous and plain, that happy peasants share!
Oh! trifle not with wants you cannot feel,
Nor mock the misery of a stinted meal;
Homely not wholesome, plain not plenteous, such
As you who praise would never deign to touch.

Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please;
Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share,
Go look within, and ask if peace be there;
If peace be his—that drooping weary sire;
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire;
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth th' expiring brand!

Nor yet can Time itself obtain for these
Life's latest comforts,—due respect and ease;
For yonder see that hoary swain, whose age
Can with no cares except his own engage;
Who, propped on that rude staff, looks up to see
The bare arms broken from the withering tree,
On which, a boy, he climbed the loftiest bough,
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.

He once was chief in all the rustic trade;
His steady hand the straightest furrow made;
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
To find the triumphs of his youth allowed;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes,
He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs:
For now he journeys to his grave in pain;
The rich disdain him; nay, the poor disdain:
Alternate masters now their slave command,
Urge the weak efforts of his feeble hand,
And, when his age attempts its task in vain,
With ruthless taunts, of lazy poor complain.

Oft may you see him when he tends the sheep,
His winter charge, beneath the hillock weep:
Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow
O'er his white locks and bury them in snow,
When, roused by rage, and muttering in the morn,
He mends the broken hedge with icy thorn:—

“Why do I live, when I desire to be
At once from life and life's long labor free?
Like leaves in spring, the young are blown away,
Without the sorrows of a slow decay;
I, like yon withered leaf, remain behind,
Nipped by the frost and shivering in the wind;
There it abides till younger buds come on,
As I, now all my fellow-swains are gone;
Then, from the rising generation thrust,
It falls, like me, unnoticed to the dust.

“These fruitful fields, these numerous flocks I see,
Are others' gain, but killing cares to me;
To me the children of my youth are lords,
Cool in their looks, but hasty in their words:
Wants of their own demand their care; and who
Feels his own want and succors others too?
A lonely, wretched man, in pain I go,
None need my help, and none relieve my woe;

Then let my bones beneath the turf be laid,
And men forget the wretch they would not aid."

Thus groan the old, till by disease oppressed,
They taste a final woe, and then they rest.

George Crabbe

THE SCHOLAR GYPSY¹

GO, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill!
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped grasses shoot another head!
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanced green.
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,

¹ "There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gypsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gypsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned."—GLANVIL'S *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661. [Author's note.]

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened in this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sundown, shepherd, will I be!
Through the 'thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gypsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars whom at college erst he knew
Met him, and of his way of life inquired;
Whereat he answered, that the gypsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.

“And I,” he said, “the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill!”

This said, he left them, and returned no more.—

But rumors hung about the countryside

That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of gray,
The same the gypsies wore.

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frocked boors
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, mid their drink and clatter, he would fly;—

And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer, on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie

Moored to the cool bank in the summer heats,
Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!

Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithc,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream!

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaved, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drenched with dew of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none has words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering
Thames,
To bathe in the abandoned lasher pass,
Have often passed thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Have known thee watching, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley-wood,
Where most the gypsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged and shreds of gray,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird picking food
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all!
So often has he known thee past him stray
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from Heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travelers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face toward Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gypsy tribe.
And thou from earth art gone

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid!
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave—
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers;
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our well-worn life, and are—what we have been!

Thou hast not lived, why shouldst thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire!
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead—
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas, have not!

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled,
brings.
O life unlike to ours!

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven: and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah, do not we, wanderer, await it too?

Yes! we await it, but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair;
But none has hope like thine!

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the countryside, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gayly as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest!
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves;
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail,
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets
of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

Matthew Arnold

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SONG OF CALLICLES¹

THROUGH the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
Thick breaks the red flame;
All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-clothed frame.

¹ From *Empedocles on Etna*.

Not here, O Apollo!
 Are haunts meet for thee.
 But, where Helicon breaks down
 In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silvered inlets
 Send far their light voice
 Up the still vale of Thisbe,
 O speed, and rejoice!

On the sward at the cliff-top
 Lie strewn the white flocks;
 On the cliff-side the pigeons
 Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,
 Soft lulled by the rills,
 Lie wrapt in their blankets,
 Asleep on the hills.

—What forms are these coming
 So white through the gloom?
 What garments out-glistening
 The gold-flowered broom?

What sweet-breathing presence
 Out-perfumes the thyme?
 What voices enrapture
 The night's balmy prime? —

'Tis Apollo comes leading
 His choir, the Nine.
 —The leader is fairest,
 But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows!
 They stream up again!
 What seeks on this mountain
 The glorified train?—

They bathe on this mountain,
 In the spring by their road;
 Then on to Olympus,
 Their endless abode!

—Whose praise do they mention?
 Of what is it told?—
 What will be for ever;
 What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father
 Of all things; and then
 The rest of immortals,
 The action of men.

The day in his hotness,
 The strife with the palm;
 The night in her silence,
 The stars in their calm.

Matthew Arnold

ADONIS, a beautiful youth loved by the goddess Aphrodite, was killed, while hunting, by a wild boar. The goddess—called also Cytheræa, Cypris, and the Lady of Cyprus—bewails his death.

¹ Translated by Sir Edwin Arnold.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Woe is me for Adonis! gone dead is the comely Adonis!
Dead is the godlike Adonis! the young Loves wail for him,
ai! ai!

Sleep no more, wrapped in thy mantles of Tyrian, lady of
Cyprus!

Rise, don thy raiment of azure, pale mourner, and beat on
thy bosom!

Tell out thy sorrow to all—he is dead, thy darling Adonis.

Ai! ai! wail for Adonis!—the young Loves wail for him, ai! ai!
Hurt on the hill lies Adonis the beautiful; torn with the
boar's tusk,

Torn on the ivory thigh with the ivory tusk, his low gasping
Anguishes Cypris' soul: the dark blood trickles in rivers
Down from his snowy side—his eyes are dreamily dimming
Under their lids; and the rose leaves his lip, and the kisses
upon it

Fade, and wax fainter, and faintest, and die, before Cypris
can snatch them;

Dear to the Goddess his kiss, though it be not the kiss of the
living;

Dear—but Adonis wists nought of the mouth that kissed him
a-dying.

Ai! ai! wail for Adonis—ai! ai! say the Loves for Adonis.
Cruel! ah, cruel the wound on the thigh of the hunter Adonis,
Yet in her innermost heart a deeper wears Queen Cytheræa.
Round the fair dead boy his hounds pace, dismally howling;
Round him the hill-spirits weep; but chiefest of all Aphrodite,
Letting her bright hair loose, goes wild through the depths of
the forest,

Passionate, panting, unkempt; with feet unsandaled, whose
beauty

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Thorn-bushes tear as she passes, and drip with the blood of the Goddess.

Bitterly, bitterly wailing, down all the long hollows she hurries,
Calling him Husband and Love—her Boy—her Syrian Hunter.

Meantime dead in his gore lieth he—from groin unto shoulder
Bloody; from breast to thigh; the fair young flank of Adonis,
Heretofore white as the snow, dull now, and dabbled with purple.

Ai! ai! woe for Adonis! the Loves say, “Woe for Adonis!”
That which hath killed her sweet lover hath killed a grace
which was godlike!

Perfect the grace seemed of Cypris so long as Adonis was
living;

Gone is her beauty now—ai! ai! gone dead with Adonis:
All the hills echo it—all the oaks whisper it, “Ah, for Adonis!”
Even the river-waves ripple the sorrows of sad Aphrodite,
Even the springs on the hills drop tears for the hunter Adonis;
Yea, and the rose-leaves are redder for grief; for the grief
Cytheræa

Tells in the hollow dells, and utters to townland and wood-
land.

Ai! ai! Lady of Cyprus, “Lo! dead is my darling Adonis!”
Echo answers thee back, “Oh! dead is thy darling Adonis.”
Who, good sooth, but would say, Ai! ai! for her passionate
story?

When that she saw and knew the wound of Adonis—the
death-wound—

Saw the blood come red from the gash, and the white thigh
a-waning,

Wide outraught she her arms, and cried, “Ah! stay, my Adonis!
Stay for me, ill-starred love!—stay! stay! till I take thee the
last time,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Hold thee and fold thee, and lips meet lips, and mingle together.

Rouse thee—a little, Adonis! kiss back for the last time, beloved!

Kiss me—kiss me—only so long as the life of a kiss is!

So I may suck from thy soul to my mouth, to my innermost heartbeat,

All the breath of thy life, and take the last of its love spell

Unto the uttermost end—one kiss! I will tenderly keep it

As I did thee, my Adonis, sith thou dost leave me, Adonis!

Far thou dost go and for long—thou goest to the region of shadows,

Unto a hateful and pitiless Power, and I, the unhappy,

Live! and alack! am a goddess, and cannot die and go after;

Take thou my spouse, dark Queen,¹ have here my husband, as thou art

Stronger by far than I, and to thee goeth all that is goodly.

Utterly hapless my fate, and utterly hopeless my grief is,

Weeping my love who is dead, and hating the Fate that hath slain him.

Fled is my joy, like a dream; thou art dead, thrice lovely and longed for!

Queen Cytheræa is widowed—the Loves in my bowers are idle—

Gone my charmed girdle with thee; why, rash one, went'st thou a-hunting?

Mad wert thou, being so fair, to match thee with beasts of the forest."

So grieved the Lady of Cyprus—the young Loves wept for her sorrow,

Saying "Ai! ai! Cytheræa! gone dead is her darling Adonis."

¹ Persephone (or Proserpine), queen of the lower world, who, with Hades (Pluto), her husband, rules over the souls of the dead.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Drop by drop as the hunter bleeds, the tears of the Goddess
Fall and blend with the blood, and both on the ground become
flowers;

Rose-blossoms grow from the blood, and wind-lilies out of
the tear-drops.

Ai! ai! comely Adonis—gone dead is the godlike Adonis;
Wander no longer bewailing in glade and in thicket, sad lady!
Fair is his bed of leaves, and fragrant the couch where thy
dead lies,

Dead, but as lovely as life—yea, dead—but as lovely as sleep
is;

Lap him in mantles of silk—such robes as he once took delight
in

When by thy side he passed in caresses the season of starbeams,
Lulled on a couch of gold—though dead, the raiments become
him;

Heap on him garlands and blossoms and buds, entomb them
together;

When that Adonis died, the flowers died too, and were with-
ered!

Rain on him perfumes and odors, shed myrtle and spices upon
him;

Let all delightful things die and go with him, for dead is the
dearest.

So lies he lovely, in death-shroud of purple, the fair young
Adonis;

Round about his couch the Loves go piteously wailing,
Tearing their hair for Adonis; and one has charge of his
arrows,

One of his polished bow, and one of his well-feathered
quiver;

One unclasps his sandal, and one in a water-pot golden
Brings bright water to lave his limbs, and one at the bier-head

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Fans with her pinions the forehead and eyes of the sleeping
Adonis.

Ah! but for Cypris herself the young Loves sorrow the sorest;
Quenched are the marriage-lamps in the halls of the God
Hymenæus,¹

Scattered his marriage crowns; no more he sings, "Hymen, oh!
Hymen,"

"Hymen!" no more is the song he goes singing, but evermore
ai! ai!

"Ah, for Adonis," he cries, and "Ah!" say the Graces,
"Adonis!"

More than the marriage-god even, they weep for the Syrian
hunter,

One to the other still saying, "Dead—dead is the lovely
Adonis!"

All the nine Muses bewail—but he hears no more music and
singing,

Nay, not if that he would; Fate holds him fast and for ever.

Cease, Cytheræa, thy sobs; a little while rest from thine
anguish,

Soon must thy tears flow again, and again comes the season
of sorrow.

Bion

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TO THE MUSES

WHETHER on Ida's shady brow,
Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the Sun, that now
From ancient melody have ceased;

¹ The marriage-god. "Hymen, oh! Hymen," of the next line, is the wedding song.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Whether in Heaven ye wander fair,
Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air,
Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,
Beneath the bosom of the sea,
Wandering in many a coral grove,—
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry;

How have you left the ancient love
That bards of old enjoyed in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move,
The sound is forced, the notes are few.

William Blake

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ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness, and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade
Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbad: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonored dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,

“Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dew away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn;

“There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

“Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

“One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath, and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

“The next, with dirges due, in sad array,
Slow through the church-way path we saw him
borne,—
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.”

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown;
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere;
 Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
 He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
 He gained from Heaven, 'twas all he wished, a
 friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose),
 The bosom of his Father and his God.

Thomas Gray

293 ODE RECITED AT THE HARVARD
 COMMEMORATION¹

JULY 21, 1865

I

WEAK-WINGED is song,
 Nor aims at that clear-ethered height
 Whither the brave deed climbs for light:
 We seem to do them wrong,
 Bringing our robin's-leaf to deck their hearse
 Who in warm life-blood wrote their nobler verse,
 Our trivial song to honor those who come
 With ears attuned to strenuous trump and drum,
 And shaped in squadron-strophes their desire,
 Live battle-odes whose lines were steel and fire:
 Yet sometimes feathered words are strong,
 A gracious memory to buoy up and save
 From Lethe's dreamless ooze, the common grave
 Of the unventurous throng.

¹ Abridged.

II

Many loved Truth, and lavished life's best oil
 Amid the dust of books to find her,
 Content at last, for guerdon of their toil,
 With the cast mantle she hath left behind her.
 Many in sad faith sought for her,
 Many with crossed hands sighed for her;
 But these, our brothers, fought for her,
 At life's dear peril wrought for her,
 So loved her that they died for her,
 Tasting the raptured fleetness
 Of her divine completeness:
 Their higher instinct knew
 Those love her best who to themselves are true,
 And what they dare to dream of, dare to do;
 They followed her and found her
 Where all may hope to find,
 Not in the ashes of the burnt-out mind,
 But beautiful, with danger's sweetness round her.
 Where faith made whole with deed
 Breathes its awakening breath
 Into the lifeless creed,
 They saw her plumed and mailed,
 With sweet, stern face unveiled,
 And all-repaying eyes, look proud on them in death.

III

Our slender life runs rippling by, and glides
 Into the silent hollow of the past;
 What is there that abides
 To make the next age better for the last?
 Is earth too poor to give us

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Something to live for here that shall outlive us?
Some more substantial boon
Than such as flows and ebbs with Fortune's fickle moon?
The little that we see
From doubt is never free;
The little that we do
Is but half-nobly true;
With our laborious hiving
What men call treasure, and the gods call dross,
Life seems a jest of Fate's contriving,
Only secure in every one's conniving,
A long account of nothings paid with loss,
Where we poor puppets, jerked by unseen wires,
After our little hour of strut and rave,
With all our pasteboard passions and desires,
Loves, hates, ambitions, and immortal fires,
Are tossed pellmell together in the grave.
But stay! no age was e'er degenerate,
Unless men held it at too cheap a rate,
For in our likeness still we shape our fate.
Ah, there is something here
Unfathomed by the cynic's sneer,
Something that gives our feeble light
A high immunity from Night,
Something that leaps life's narrow bars
To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven;
A seed of sunshine that can leaven
Our earthly dullness with the beams of stars,
And glorify our clay
With light from fountains elder than the Day;
A conscience more divine than we,
A gladness fed with secret tears,
A vexing, forward-reaching sense
Of some more noble permanence;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A light across the sea,
Which haunts the soul and will not let it be,
Still beaconing from the heights of undegenerate years.

IV

Life may be given in many ways,
And loyalty to Truth be sealed
As bravely in the closet as the field,
So bountiful is Fate;
But then to stand beside her,
When craven churls deride her,
To front a lie in arms and not to yield,
This shows, methinks, God's plan
And measure of a stalwart man,
Limbed like the old heroic breeds,
Who stands self-poised on manhood's solid earth,
Not forced to frame excuses for his birth,
Fed from within with all the strength he needs.

V

Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,
Whom late the Nation he had led,
With ashes on her head,
Wept with the passion of an angry grief:
Forgive me, if from present things I turn
To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,
And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.
Nature, they say, doth dote,
And cannot make a man
Save on some worn-out plan,
Repeating us by rote:
For him her Old-World molds aside she threw,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And choosing sweet clay from the breast
Of the unexhausted West,
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.

How beautiful to see
Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,
Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;
One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,
Not lured by any cheat of birth,
But by his clear-grained human worth,
And brave old wisdom of sincerity!

They knew that outward grace is dust;
They could not choose but trust
In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,
And supple-tempered will
That bent like perfect steel to spring again and thrust.
His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind;
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.

Nothing of Europe here,
Or, then, of Europe fronting mornward still,
Ere any names of Serf and Peer
Could Nature's equal scheme deface
And thwart her genial will;
Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.

I praise him not; it were too late;
And some innative weakness there must be
In him who condescends to victory
Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Safe in himself as in a fate.
So always firmly he:
He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

VI

Long as man's hope insatiate can discern
Or only guess some more inspiring goal
Outside of Self, enduring as the pole,
Along whose course the flying axles burn
Of spirits bravely-pitched, earth's manlier brood;
Long as below we cannot find
The meed that stills the inexorable mind;
So long this faith to some ideal Good,
Under whatever mortal names it masks,
Freedom, Law, Country, this ethereal mood
That thanks the Fates for their severer tasks,
Feeling its challenged pulses leap,
While others skulk in subterfuges cheap,
And, set in Danger's van, has all the boon it asks,
Shall win man's praise and woman's love,
Shall be a wisdom that we set above
All other skills and gifts to culture dear,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A virtue round whose forehead we inwreathe
Laurels that with a living passion breathe
When other crowns grow, while we twine them, sear.
What brings us thronging these high rites to pay,
And seal these hours the noblest of our year,
Save that our brothers found this better way?

VII

We sit here in the Promised Land
That flows with Freedom's honey and milk;
But 'twas they won it, sword in hand,
Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk.
We welcome back our bravest and our best;—
Ah me! not all! some come not with the rest,
Who went forth brave and bright as any here!
I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,
But the sad strings complain,
And will not please the ear:
I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane
Again and yet again
Into a dirge, and die away, in pain.
In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,
Thinking of dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,
Dark to the triumph which they died to gain:
Fittier may others greet the living,
For me the past is unforgiving;
I with uncovered head
Salute the sacred dead,
Who went, and who return not.— Say not so!
'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,
But the high faith that failed not by the way;
Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;
No ban of endless night exiles the brave;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And to the saner mind
We rather seem the dead that stayed behind.
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack:
I see them muster in a gleaming row,
With ever-youthful brows that nobler show;
We find in our dull road their shining track;

In every nobler mood
We feel the orient of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good,
Of all our saintlier aspiration;

They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation!

VIII

Boom, cannon, boom to all the winds and waves!
Clash out, glad bells, from every rocking steeple!
Banners, advance with triumph, bend your staves!

And from every mountain-peak
Let beacon-fire to answering beacon speak,
Katahdin tell Monadnock, Whiteface he,
And so leap on in light from sea to sea,
Till the glad news be sent
Across a kindling continent,
Making earth feel more firm and air breathe braver:
"Be proud! for she is saved, and all have helped to save
her!

She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
She of the open soul and open door,
With room about her hearth for all mankind!
The fire is dreadful in her eyes no more;
From her bold front the helm she doth unbind,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Sends all her handmaid armies back to spin,
And bids her navies, that so lately hurled
Their crashing battle, hold their thunders in,
Swimming like birds of calm along the unharmed
shore.

No challenge sends she to the elder world,
That looked askance and hated; a light scorn
Plays o'er her mouth, as round her mighty knees
She calls her children back, and waits the morn
Of nobler day, enthroned between her subject seas."

IX

Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release!
Thy God, in these distempered days,
Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of His ways,
And through thine enemies hath wrought thy peace!
Bow down in prayer and praise!
No poorest in thy borders but may now
Lift to the juster skies a man's enfranchised brow.
O Beautiful! my country! ours once more!
Smoothing thy gold of war-disheveled hair
O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,
And letting thy set lips,
Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,
The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,
What words divine of lover or of poet
Could tell our love and make thee know it,
Among the Nations bright beyond compare?
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee;
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!

James Russell Lowell

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!¹

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought
is won,

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths—for you the shores
a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and
done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!

But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman

¹ A tribute to Abraham Lincoln.

295 ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S
PICTURE

O THAT those lips had language! Life has passed
 With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
 Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
 The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
 Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
 “Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!”
 The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
 (Blest be the art that can immortalize,
 The art that baffles Time’s tyrannic claim
 To quench it) here shines on me still the same.

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
 O welcome guest, though unexpected here!
 Who bidd’st me honor with an artless song,
 Affectionate, a mother lost so long.
 I will obey, not willingly alone,
 But gladly, as the precept were her own:
 And, while that face renews my filial grief,
 Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
 Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
 A momentary dream that thou art she.

My mother! when I learned that thou wast dead,
 Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
 Hovered thy spirit o’er thy sorrowing son,
 Wretch even then, life’s journey just begun?
 Perhaps thou gav’st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
 Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—
 Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes.
 I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
 I saw the hearse, that bore thee slow away,
 And, turning from my nurs’ry window, drew

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such?—It was.—Where thou art gone,
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wished, I long believed,
And, disappointed still, was still deceived;
By expectation ev'ry day beguiled,
Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went
Till, all my stock of infant-sorrow spent,
I learned at last submission to my lot,
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nurs'ry floor;
And where the gard'ner Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet cap,
'Tis now become a hist'ry little known,
That once we called the past'ral house our own.
Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That mem'ry keeps of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.
Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou might'st know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheeks bestowed
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed!
All this, and more endearing still than all,

Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
 Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and brakes
 That humor interposed too often makes;
 All this still legible in mem'ry's page,
 And still to be so to my latest age,
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
 Such honors to thee as my numbers may;
 Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
 Not scorned in Heav'n, though little noticed here.

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours
 When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flow'rs,
 The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
 I pricked them into paper with a pin
 (And thou wast happier than myself the while,
 Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head, and smile);
 Could those few pleasant days again appear,
 Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
 I would not trust my heart—the dear delight
 Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might.—
 But no—what here we call our life is such,
 So little to be loved, and thou so much,
 That I should ill requite thee to constrain
 Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
 (The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed)
 Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,
 Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,
 There sits quiescent on the floods, that show
 Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
 While airs impregnated with incense play
 Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
 So thou, with sails how swift! hast reached the shore
 "Where tempests never beat, nor billows roar,"
 And thy loved consort on the dang'rous tide

Of life long since has anchored by thy side.
 But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
 Always from port withheld, always distressed—
 Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest-tossed,
 Sails ripped, seams op'ning wide, and compass lost,
 And day by day some current's thwarting force
 Sets me more distant from a prosp'rous course.
 Yet O the thought, that thou art safe, and he!
 That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
 My boast is not that I deduce my birth
 From loins enthroned, and rulers of the Earth;
 But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
 The son of parents passed into the skies.
 And now, farewell—time unrevoked has run
 His wonted course, yet what I wished is done.
 By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
 I seem t' have lived my childhood o'er again;
 To have renewed the joys that once were mine,
 Without the sin of violating thine;
 And, while the wings of Fancy still are free,
 And I can view this mimic show of thee,
 Time has but half succeeded in his theft—
 Thyself removed, thy pow'r to soothe me left.

William Cowper

RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER, 1857¹

COLDLY, sadly descends
 The autumn evening! The field
 Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
 Of withered leaves, and the elms,

¹ In memory of the author's father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous head-master of Rugby.

Fade into dimness apace,
 Silent;—hardly a shout
 From a few boys late at their play!
 The lights come out in the street,
 In the school-room windows; but cold,
 Solemn, unlighted, austere,
 Through the gathering darkness, arise
 The chapel walls, in whose bound
 Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
 Of the autumn evening. But, ah!
 That word, *gloom*, to my mind
 Brings thee back in the light
 Of thy radiant vigor again!
 In the gloom of November we passed
 Days not of gloom at thy side;
 Seasons impaired not the ray
 Of thine even cheerfulness clear.
 Such thou wast! and I stand
 In the autumn evening, and think
 Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
 Since thou arodest to tread,
 In the summer morning, the road
 Of death, at a call unforeseen,
 Sudden! For fifteen years,
 We who till then in thy shade
 Rested as under the boughs
 Of a mighty oak, have endured
 Sunshine and rain as we might,
 Bare, unshaded, alone,
 Lacking the shelter of thee!

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practiced that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly represses the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succorest!—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?—
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish! and no one asks

Who or what they have been,
 More than he asks what waves,
 In the moonlit solitudes mild
 Of the midmost Ocean, have swelled,
 Foamed for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
 Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
 Not with the crowd to be spent—
 Not without aim to go round
 In an eddy of purposeless dust,
 Effort unmeaning and vain.
 Ah yes, some of us strive
 Not without action to die
 Fruitless, but something to snatch
 From dull oblivion, nor all
 Glut the devouring grave!
 We, we have chosen our path—
 Path to a clear-purposed goal,
 Path of advance!—but it leads
 A long, steep journey, through sunk
 Gorges, o'er mountains in snow!
 Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
 Then, on the height, comes the storm!
 Thunder crashes from rock
 To rock, the cataracts reply;
 Lightnings dazzle our eyes;
 Roaring torrents have breached
 The track—the stream-bed descends
 In the place where the wayfarer once
 Planted his footstep—the spray
 Boils o'er its borders! aloft
 The unseen snow-beds dislodge
 Their hanging ruin;—alas,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Havoc is made in our train!
Friends who set forth at our side
Falter, are lost in the storm!
We, we only, are left!
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compressed, we strain on,
On—and at nightfall, at last,
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm!
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripped, without friends, as we are!
Friends, companions, and train
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we, in our march,
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still

Beckonedst the trembler, and still
 Gavest the weary thy hand!
 If, in the paths of the world,
 Stones might have wounded thy feet,
 Toil or dejection have tried
 Thy spirit, of that we saw
 Nothing! to us thou wert still
 Cheerful, and helpful, and firm.
 Therefore to thee it was given
 Many to save with thyself;
 And, at the end of thy day,
 O faithful shepherd! to come,
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.¹

And through thee I believe
 In the noble and great who are gone;
 Pure souls honored and blest
 By former ages, who else—
 Such, so soulless, so poor,
 Is the race of men whom I see—
 Seemed but a dream of the heart,
 Seemed but a cry of desire.
 Yes! I believe that there lived
 Others like thee in the past,
 Not like the men of the crowd
 Who all round me to-day
 Bluster or cringe, and make life
 Hideous, and arid, and vile;
 But souls tempered with fire,
 Fervent, heroic, and good,
 Helpers and friends of mankind.

¹ "Marcus Aurelius," the Poet elsewhere remarks, "saved his own soul by his righteousness, and he could do no more." Happy they who can do this! but still happier, who can do more."

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Servants of God!—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost—
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! in the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line!
Where are they tending?—A God
Marshaled them, gave them their goal.—
Ah, but the way is so long!
Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them; the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe.
Factions divide them—their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.—
Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive!
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Labor for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardor divine.
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,

Weakness is not in your word,
 Weariness not on your brow.
 Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
 Panic, despair, flee away.
 Ye move through the ranks, recall
 The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
 Praise, reinspire the brave!
 Order, courage, return.
 Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
 Follow your steps as ye go.
 Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
 Strengthen the wavering line,
 Stablish, continue our march,
 On, to the bound of the waste,
 On, to the City of God!

Matthew Arnold

297

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXIII¹

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
 By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
 Thou madest Life in man and brute;
 Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
 Is on the skull which thou hast made.

¹ Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the distinguished historian Henry Hallam, died in Vienna, September 15, 1833, at the age of twenty-two. Tennyson was two years his senior.

Thirty-two poems and part of another, out of a total of one hundred and thirty-three, are here reprinted. They are presented in their original order, but the lyrics selected from the body of the elegy are renumbered, consecutively, without regard to their proper numbers.

The poems constituting *In Memoriam*—"brief lays, of sorrow born"—were composed at intervals over a considerable number of years.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me,
What seemed my worth since I began;
For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
 Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
 I trust he lives in thee, and there
 I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
 Confusions of a wasted youth;
 Forgive them where they fail in truth,
 And in thy wisdom make me wise.

I

I SOMETIMES hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel;
 For words, like Nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
 A use in measured language lies;
 The sad mechanic exercise,
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
 Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
 But that large grief which these enfold
 Is given in outline and no more.

II

ONE writes, that "other friends remain,"
 That "loss is common to the race"—
 And common is the commonplace,
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more.
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledgest now thy gallant son,
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor,—while thy head is bowed,
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, "here to-day,"
Or "here to-morrow will he come."

O, somewhere, meek, unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;
And thinking, "This will please him best,"
She takes a ribband or a rose;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

For he will see them on to-night;
And with the thought her color burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turned, the curse
Had fallen, and her future lord
Was drowned in passing thro' the ford,
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O, what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me no second friend.

III

DARK house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

IV

A HAPPY lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,
Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber, and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
In those deserted walks, may find
A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she fostered up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,
O my forsaken heart, with thee
And this poor flower of poesy
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanished eye,
I go to plant it on his tomb,
That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.

v

STILL onward winds the dreary way;
 I with it; for I long to prove
 No lapse of moons can canker Love,
 Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
 And goodness, and hath power to see
 Within the green the moldèred tree,
 And towers fall'n as soon as built—

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
 Or see (in Him is no before)
 In more of life true life no more
 And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
 Breaks hither over Indian seas,
 That Shadow waiting with the keys,
 To shroud me from my proper scorn.

vi

I ENVY not in any moods
 The captive void of noble rage,
 The linnet born within the cage,
 That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes
 His license in the field of time,
 Unfettered by the sense of crime,
 To whom a conscience never wakes;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

VII

THE time draws near the birth of Christ.
The moon is hid, the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound;

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and good will, good will and peace,
Peace and good will, to all mankind.

This year I slept, and woke with pain,
I almost wished no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again;

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controlled me when a boy;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

They bring me sorrow touched with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

VIII

MY own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild Poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

IX

THAT each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good:
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
"Farewell! We lose ourselves in light."

x

HOW many a father have I seen,
A sober man, among his boys,
Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
Who wears his manhood hale and green:

And dare we to this fancy give,
That had the wild oat not been sown,
The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
The grain by which a man may live?

Or, if we held the doctrine sound
For life outliving heats of youth,
Yet who would preach it as a truth
To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good: define it well:
For fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the Lords of Hell.

XI

O YET we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
 That not one life shall be destroyed,
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,
 When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
 That not a moth with vain desire
 Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
 Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last—far off—at last, to all,
 And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
 An infant crying in the night;
 An infant crying for the light;
 And with no language but a cry.

XII

THE wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul?

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

XIII

“SO careful of the type?” but no.
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, “A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.

“Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death;
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more.” And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,

Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tear each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

XIV

PEACE; come away: the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song.

Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;
But half my life I leave behind.
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But I shall pass, my work will fail.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;
And "Ave, Ave, Ave," said,
"Adieu, adieu," for evermore.

xv

DOST thou look back on what hath been,
As some divinely gifted man,
Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mold a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope . . .
The pillar of a people's hope,
The center of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
When all his active powers are still,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
While yet beside its vocal springs
He played at counselors and kings
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who plows with pain his native lea
And reaps the labor of his hands,
Or in the furrow musing stands:
“Does my old friend remember me?”

XVI

I CANNOT see the features right,
When on the gloom I strive to paint
The face I know; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
A hand that points, and palled shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
And shoals of puckered faces drive;
Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And thro' a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

XVII

I PASSED beside the reverend walls
In which of old I wore the gown;
I roved at random thro' the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes
The storm their high-built organs make,
And thunder-music, rolling, shake
The prophet blazoned on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
The measured pulse of racing oars
Among the willows; paced the shores
And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats again, and felt
The same, but not the same; and last
Up that long walk of limes I past
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door.
I lingered; all within was noise
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys
That crashed the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
And labor, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

When one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string;
And one would pierce an outer ring,
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master-bowman, he,
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and grace
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo? ¹

XVIII

WITCH-ELMS that counterchange the floor
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

¹ Another observer of Hallam—Fanny Kemble—said of him: "There was a gentleness and purity almost virginal in his voice, manner, and countenance; and the upper part of his face, his forehead and eyes (perhaps in readiness for his early translation), wore the angelic radiance that they still must wear in Heaven. Some time or other, at some rare moments of the divine spirit's supremacy in our souls, we all put on the heavenly face that will be ours hereafter, and for a brief lightning space our friends behold us as we shall look when this mortal has put on immortality. On Arthur Hallam's brow and eyes this heavenly light, so fugitive on other human faces, rested habitually, as if he was thinking and seeing in Heaven."

The last two lines of the poem allude to a similarity of feature between Hallam and Michael Angelo—a similarity which Hallam himself had remarked to the Poet.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town:

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixed in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts
And dusty purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,
Immantled in ambrosial dark,
To drink the cooler air, and mark
The landscape winking thro' the heat:

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn:

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon:

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,
Discussed the books to love or hate,
Or touched the changes of the state,
Or threaded some Socratic dream;

But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For "ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

"And merge," he said, "in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man."
We talked: the stream beneath us ran,
The wine-flask lying couched in moss,

Or cooled within the glooming wave;
And last, returning from afar,
Before the crimson-circled star
Had fall'n into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
We heard behind the woodbine veil
The milk that bubbled in the pail,
And buzzings of the honeyed hours.

XIX

YOU say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true;

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the specters of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

XX

HEART-AFFLUENCE in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye
That saw thro' all the Muses' walk;

Seraphic intellect and force
To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassioned logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

High nature amorous of the good,
But touched with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Thro' all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;

And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unasked, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
Have looked on: if they looked in vain,
My shame is greater who remain,
Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

XXI

WHO loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper! Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire;
She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—
She cannot fight the fear of death.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of demons? fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. Let her know her place;
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain, and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With Wisdom, like the younger child;

For she is earthly of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
O friend, who camest to thy goal
So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity.

XXII

NOW fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drowned in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too, and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

XXIII

CONTEMPLATE all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time
Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crowned with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

XXIV

I TRUST I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was *born* to other things.

XXV

THERE rolls the deep where grew the tree.
 O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
 There where the long street roars hath been
 The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
 From form to form, and nothing stands;
 They melt like mist, the solid lands,
 Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
 And dream my dream, and hold it true;
 For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
 I cannot think the thing farewell.

XXVI

THAT which we dare invoke to bless;
 Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
 He, They, One, All; within, without;
 The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
 Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
 Nor thro' the questions men may try,
 The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
 I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
 And heard an ever-breaking shore
 That tumbled in the Godless deep;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamor made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, molding men.

XXVII

WHATEVER I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, tho' there often seemed to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet hope had never lost her youth,
She did but look through dimmer eyes;
Or Love but played with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fixed in truth;

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the songs;
And if the words were sweet and strong
He set his royal signet there;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Abiding with me till I sail
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
And this electric force, that keeps
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

XXVIII

LOVE is and was my lord and king,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within the court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

XXIX

DEAR friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal,
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown, human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

XXX

THY voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less.

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mixed with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

XXXI

O LIVING will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

REFLECTIVE, DESCRIPTIVE AND ELEGIAC POEMS

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

THE epilogue of the poem concludes with a prophetic vision of "the crowning race"—

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod
This planet, was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

Alfred Tennyson

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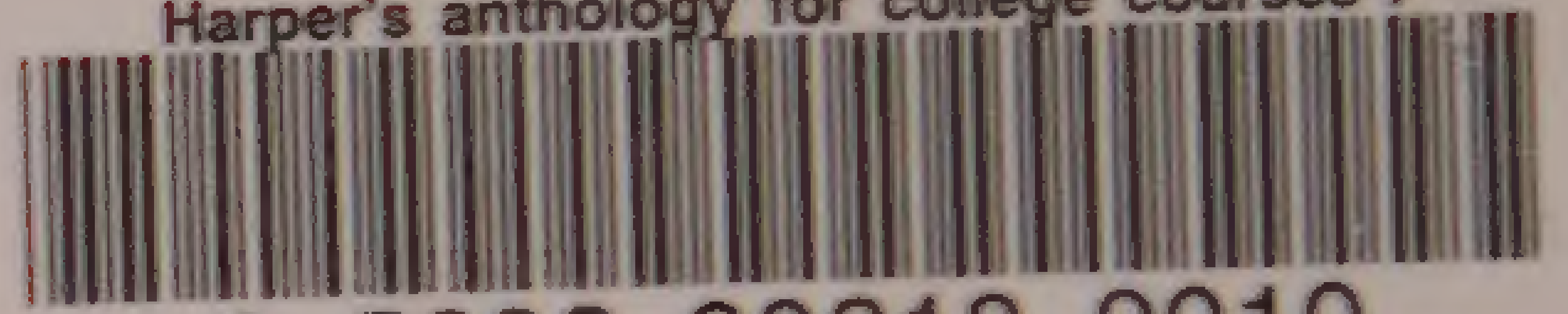
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